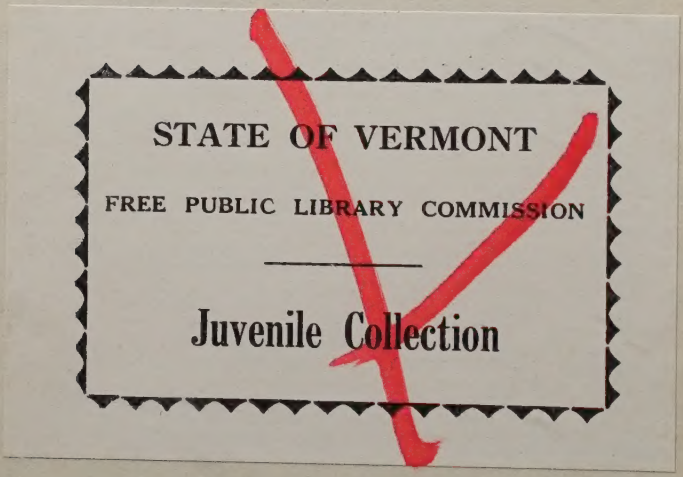
MADE-TO-ORDER STORIES

by

DOROTHY CANFIELD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Made-to-Order Stories

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by

DOROTHY CANFIELD

with illustrations by

DOROTHY P. LATHROP

NEW YORK

HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY

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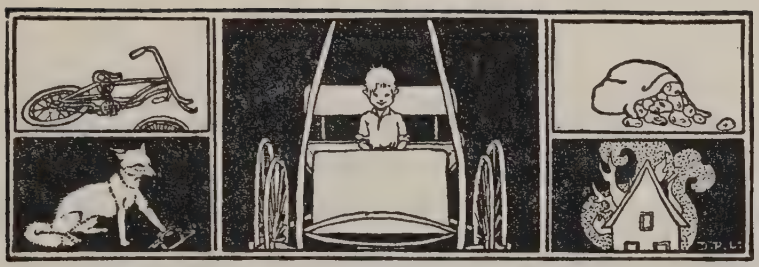
Made-to-Order Stories

(According to the Recipe of a Little Boy of Ten)

"I do hate fairies in stories," said Jimmy; "they're so foolish. And I hate things that couldn't possibly have happened. And I despise a story that tries to teach you something without your knowing it. And all that's why I like Mother's stories. But the thing I like best of all about them is that there isn't ever any moral to them."

"No, nor any sense," said a grown-up.

"Yes," said Jimmy, "that *is* another nice thing about them."



The Pony-Cart

"Seems as though we hadn't had any made-to-order stories for quite a while," said Jimmy; "and I'm sort of hungry for one."

"All right," said his mother. "Have you settled yet what you want to have in it, this time?"

Jimmy fell into deep thought. You might perhaps imagine, from the jumbled-up things he puts together for his stories, that he grabs up any idea that comes into his head. But you'd be mistaken, for he often takes a long time to make his choice.

By and by he said: "I believe I'll have it about a sack of potatoes, a busted bicycle, a fox caught in a trap, a pony-cart, and a house afire. And of course a little boy."

"You're not quite exactly right about its being a

house afire," said his mother, "although yes, in a way it was, too. The house was one of those farmhouses where everything is hitched together, house and woodshed and barn and stables; and of course when any part of that gets on fire, it is all apt to go.

"So when the hired man tipped over a lantern in the woodshed, that evening, you might, sure enough, say that the house was on fire; although the wind blew from the east that night, so that the flames were blown away from the house part."

"That was lucky," said Jimmy.

"No, it wasn't," said his mother, "not a bit. Folks have sense enough to get out when their houses catch on fire, but horses lose their heads and get so scared they won't budge." With that she was off on the story.

The men surely did have a bad time with the horses that night. They reared and plunged and snorted, and the worse the smoke rolled in, the worse they carried on. And they would *not* back out of their stalls. The hired man said they were lost, but the farmer thought if he could tear off the boards in front of their stalls,

he could lead them out frontwards. And it was in hurrying around through the back of the shed, to get at those boards from the other side, that they happened to give the lonesome old pony-cart such a shove.

It had stood there for a year now, back of the plow and the hayrake and the tedder, nobody ever giving it a thought, except the chickens. They used to like to roost around in it on rainy afternoons. And for a while one hen had the habit of laying her egg on its seat. But that really is no comfort to a pony-cart, is it? You see the farmer never had wanted the shabby

old thing at all. But at an auction sale the year before, the auctioneer had put it up for sale together with a wash-boiler and a churn, and the farmer's wife wanted those, so he bid them all in. Then of course he had to take the pony-cart. He hitched it to the back of his buckboard, pulled it home, tied the shafts up so they wouldn't be in the way, and rolled it in under the shed, back of the farming tools.

There it had stood, till the night of the fire, when the men, hustling to get those boards torn off, slammed into the shed, pulling and hauling and shoving things out of their way. They'd had to give such a great heave to the heavy plow to get it to one side that, without thinking, they gave just another such push to the little light pony-cart, and sent it spinning away out into the barnyard. It was in everybody's way there, for by this time all the neighbors had arrived and were running and shouting and carrying pails of water. First one and then another of the men gave it a shove this way and a push that.

Finally somebody, without noticing it, kicked it right through the barnyard gate, and it began to roll down the hilly road that led to the farm.

The slope was gentle, just enough to keep it going, and the ruts were deep enough to keep its wheels in place. It moved slowly forward, very thankful to be on a road once more, and quite as thankful to be out of the hurry and shouting and glare of the barnyard. By this time, the sparks were falling too fast and hot to be comfortable anywhere near the fire.

Very pleasantly and smoothly it drifted down the road, past the lane that leads up to Peckham Hollow, past the two big pines, past the sand-bank; it had gone as far as the turn by the sumac-bushes when a thank-you-ma'am stopped it. There it stood, its shafts pointing straight up, very quiet and peaceful under a starry sky, with the sweet dew falling on its poor, dried-up old spokes and body. It wasn't sorry to rest awhile, after its first outing for such a long time.

By and by Herbert Poole came along the wood-road from Peckham Hollow, pushing his bicycle. I should say he was *trying* to push it, for the front wheel had come off, and he had to carry that with one hand and hold up the handle-bars with the other. He might

have done this better if he hadn't had a good deal of moonshine whisky that evening; for I am sorry to say that that is what Herbert had gone to Peckham Hollow to get. As it was, he was having a fearful time, trying to manage those wheels separately, and manage himself too, which was the hardest of all. He turned down the main road, feeling dizzier and dizzier, and staggered along till he ran into the pony-cart, standing quietly in the middle of the road, with its shafts pointing straight up.

Herbert's eyes were used to the dark, after walking in it so long, and he could perfectly well see what was there. But he didn't believe it. How could a pony-cart be standing all by itself, spang in the middle of the main road at one o'clock in the morning? Of course it couldn't be. He said to himself for the fortieth time that he never would drink a drop of whisky again, because it made him so crazy. Just think of not being able to tell a pony-cart from a hole in the air. It was dreadful! He leaned up against it to collect his mind.

He leaned there for a long time. Maybe he went to sleep leaning. When he woke up he had a new idea.

If the pony-cart really wasn't there, he couldn't lean up against it, could he? He thought this over, and decided he couldn't. Then it really *was* there. And if it really was, it would help him like anything, in getting home with that broken bicycle of his. In a jiffy he had piled up the two parts of the bicycle between the seat and the dashboard, and began to lean a little harder on the back. Away it went, over the thank-you-ma'am and gently on down the hill. Herbert leaned and pushed for what seemed a long time to him, though it really wasn't. Then, when the road began to go uphill a little, so that the leaning was harder, he thought he really would have to rest awhile. He lay down on the bank under a pine tree and in a minute he was sound asleep, and never woke up till long past sunrise.

So there, half a mile farther along the road, stood the pony-cart again, with its shafts pointing straight up to the stars. Only now it had the broken bicycle for company.

The next person who came along did not run into the pony-cart as Herbert had. Not by any means!

For the next person was the man they called Uncle Mitt, the old scalawag who camped up in Prello's deserted lumber-camp, and made his living (so *he* said) by trapping. Everybody else said he made it by picking up things that other people left lying around loose. He'd been up at the fire of course, for he always turned up where anything was happening. But the family had kept such a close watch on him that all he had been able to get away with was half of a sack of potatoes that had been left standing in the garden. That was enough sight heavier than what he'd have *liked* to carry off: but it was his idea always to take what you could get, rather than nothing, so he heaved it up on his back and came away.

Now of course he had no wish to get caught with those potatoes on his back, so he walked carefully, and didn't make any noise, and kept his eye peeled for anybody in the road. When he caught a glimpse of something dark looming up in front of him, he stopped, moved off to one side, behind some bushes, and waited. Of course nothing happened. The black mass went on looming. Yet it was certainly in the middle of the road. And Uncle Mitt knew very well that it is not

the habit of things in the middle of the road to stand still. He waited and waited. Then he hid his sack of potatoes and tiptoed along the road to see what it was.

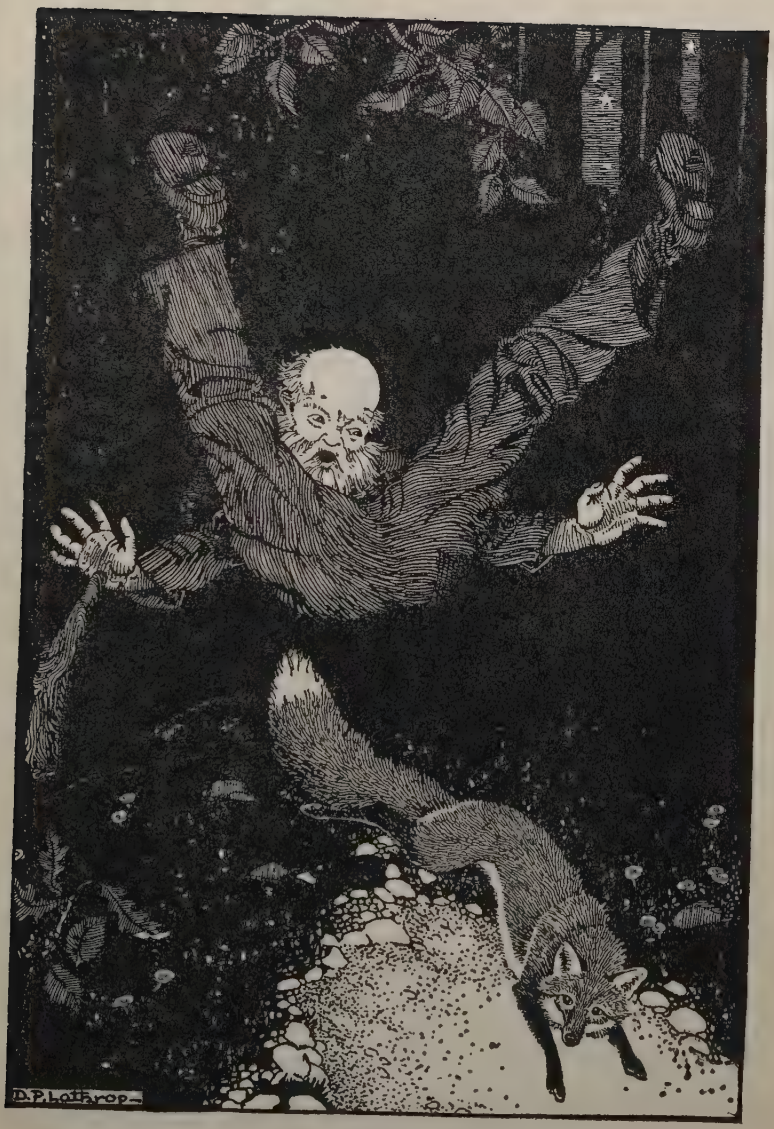
"Oh, yes, that old Randall pony-cart!" He knew it, had seen it being shoved around in the barnyard, and guessed in a minute what had happened. Of course he was somewhat surprised when he felt around and made out that it was loaded with a broken bicycle. But everything was grist that came to his mill. He could sell even a broken bicycle for *some*thing. So he went back, got his sack of potatoes, put it in on top of the bicycle and started pushing the cart along the road. He was a rugged old villain, Uncle Mitt was, like all people who live outdoors, and he made nothing of shoving it along, the way a woman pushes a baby carriage. He was quite pleased with his luck too. A pony-cart, a bicycle, and half a sack of potatoes weren't so bad for *one* night's work. If you could call it work.

Well, he shoved it along in a great hurry to get it where he could hide it, and when he came to a little side road, he turned into it. He knew all about it, the side road, because he had set a fox-trap near it lately, and wanted to go there anyhow, to see if he had caught

anything. So, by and by, he left the pony-cart standing for just a minute, while he went off to look at his trap.

At least he *meant* it to be just a minute or two, but it was quite a time before he could get back. For there was a fox caught in his trap; caught but not much hurt. It was a big, angry dog-fox who sprang at Uncle Mitt so fiercely that the old man had to stand off and try to study out a way to manage things. He decided to try to kill the fox with a club, but as he raised the stick, the fox tore itself loose, leaving only a little skin of its left forefoot in the trap. It ran right between Uncle Mitt's legs and tripped him, so that he fell down and hit his head hard on the steel trap and all but cracked his skull. For my part I am very glad of it, too! He lay there, stunned, for about half an hour, and when he got back to the wood-road, there wasn't hide nor hair to be seen of the pony-cart. Nor yet of the broken bicycle. Nor of his sack of potatoes.

What had happened was this: a real sure-enough horse-thief had been hanging around there for some



It ran right between Uncle Mitt's legs and tripped him.

weeks, not any little old sneak-thief, like Uncle Mitt, but a bad man who carried revolvers. He had been waiting till the police stopped making a fuss about some horse-stealing he'd done in the next state. In the meantime he kept his hand in by stealing what horses he could, and passing them by night over into the next county, where a friend of his took them and drove them down to the city to sell at the horse-market there. This horse-thief had noticed a family of gypsies, traveling by day and camping by night, with a pair of poor thin work-horses, hardly worth stealing, but with quite a good-looking pony led behind the wagon. Ponies weren't in his line, but he thought it might be easy to snap this one up at night when the gypsies were asleep. Easy enough he found it, too, the first night he tried. He was surprised to see that the gypsies didn't keep any guard awake at night. When he crept up to where the hobbled horses were grazing, everybody in the tent seemed to be so sound asleep that he thought he might as well have the team-horses as well. So he took all three, and was hurrying along with them over the wood-road when suddenly, there in front of him, with its shafts up over its head

(so to speak) stood the pony-cart, loaded with a bicycle and a sack of potatoes.

"Fine!" thought the thief. "Here's luck! I can get along lots faster if I drive." He turned the cart around, fixed up a rough harness with the straps of the hobbles, fastened the pony into the cart, and drove off at a good trot, leading the team-horses behind.

The road he wanted to follow soon branched off from the wood-road. It was just a trail which led by his hidden camp, over the mountain to the main road in the next county. The wind had been high that night, and just before he came to his camp, he was stopped by a blown-over tree lying across the path. He hitched the pony to a tree and hurried off to get an ax. By that time it was getting a little lighter in the woods and he knew he had no time to lose, if he wanted to hide the horses before dawn.

Now I'll have to take you back to the gypsies; and the first thing to find out there is that they weren't gypsies the least bit, but just an ordinary family out of luck, who were moving to another place to live

Their farm had been ruined by the flood that came after the breaking of a big dam, and they'd packed up what few things they had left, to move out to a place where the wife had a rich cousin living. She thought that maybe if he took things right, he might help them a little to get started again. But they got more and more discouraged as they went along. The lumber-wagon without any springs was very hard to ride in, and the old grandmother and the little boy were so tired when night came that they couldn't sleep. The big, half-grown boy was wild with the fidgets from sitting still on a hard seat so long, or else trudging along in the dust. The five of them, added to everything else in the wagon, made a heavy load and the horses got poorer and thinner every day. The father of the family tried to rig up some way to hitch the pony on ahead, tandem, to help the horses pull the wagon, but it didn't work. The big boy was too heavy to ride the pony, and the little boy too young. Nothing fitted anything. They were all as blue and sad and discouraged as could be, and surer and surer that the rich cousin wouldn't have anything to do with such a poor-house set as they looked.

So one night, when the father woke up with a start, and looked out between the tent-flaps and saw a man going off with their horses, it seemed to him just like another piece of their usual bad luck. He didn't dare say a word, for they had camped that night off in a lonely place, on a side-road, with no house near, and he thought very likely the thief was armed. And he was, you remember. The father woke the mother up and told her in a whisper what was happening and said he was going to follow and see where the thief took the horses. His wife was awfully scared at the idea of his going off in the woods, alone, tracking a desperate horse-thief who would surely just as soon shoot him as not. But he promised her that he would be very careful, and not show himself at all; and he reminded her that if they lost their horses they might as well give up. He said he couldn't bear not to try to get them back.

Off he went, creeping along in the bushes at the edge of the wood-road, just able to make out the dim mass of the man and the three horses. When the thief stopped to harness the pony into the cart the father thought of course it had all been planned that way,

and gave up hope, for how could he ever go as fast as a trotting pony?

Of course he couldn't, and didn't; and got left way behind, run and hurry and pant as he might. This made him really desperate, so that he forgot to try to hide himself and just put his head down and tore along, pound! pound! pound! as fast as he could pelt. He saw by the wheel-tracks where the thief had turned off into the trail, and was racing along after, when right before him, didn't he run slap on to his own horses, tied to the cart, and his own pony hitched fast to a fallen tree. And not another soul around!

You may be sure he lost no time. He jerked the pony's hitch-strap loose, turned the cart around, and, climbing in over the potatoes and the broken bicycle, he whipped up the pony as she'd never been whipped before.

Back in the mover's tent, they were all worked up, as you can imagine. The poor mother couldn't keep back her tears, and her crying woke the others up, and they huddled together, waiting and waiting and never taking their eyes off the road, as it gradually grew

lighter in the dawn. The boys felt sorry, of course, to see their mother crying, and they hoped nothing was going to happen to their father; but mostly they were just *mad* all through, to think that they hadn't waked up in time to see a really-truly horse-thief, just like what you see in the movies; and hadn't been there to go off with their father, stalking the villain through the jungle—in a manner of speaking. They couldn't bear not to be in it at all, and begged their mother to let them go just a little way down the road. Finally she said they might, if they would promise not to get out of sight.

So they went down to where the road made a turn, and looked along it, and what did they see?

You know what they saw! Their father, safe and sound, sitting in a pony-cart they'd never laid eyes on before, driving like mad, with the heads of the team-horses bobbing up and down behind. The boys let out a yell that brought their mother and grandmother running, and in a minute they were all together, everybody talking at once, and nobody understanding anything anybody said, except that they could hear their father shouting over and over:

"Let him come and *ask* for his pony-cart, if he dares! That's all I say! Just let him come and ask for it!"

But, of course, the horse-thief took mighty good care not to do that. The pony-cart was theirs, just what they needed so much. The father got out an old pot of yellow paint they'd brought along in the corner of the wagon, and gave it two coats of paint, so that it looked as good as new. The mother and grandmother hunted in their piece-bag and found enough brown corduroy to cover the cushions. And they traded off their phonograph (they were tired of it anyhow), for a secondhand harness that was lots better than it looked. When they had that nicely oiled and blackened, and the pony curried, and the little boy and his grandmother in their best clothes driving it, they certainly did not look at all like poor relations come to ask a favor, but like your own folks come to make a visit.

The older boy got the bicycle mended at the first village they passed through, and he rode that. With three people out, the load was much less for the team-

horses, and they began to lay on some fat and look better. When they got to the town where the wife's rich cousin lived, they sent the stylish little pony-cart and the bicycle on first, with the little boy and his mother driving the pony. They made such a good impression on the rich cousin that he thought to himself, "Why, here's just the chance to get nice, steady people in as tenants on that river farm of mine!" And when the father and the grandmother drove up in the lumber-wagon it was all settled, and they drove right on to their new home.

"But see here," cried Jimmy. "What did all those people think when they woke up, or came back and found the pony-cart gone? They wouldn't let it be carried off that way, would they, without saying a word?"

"Well, take Herbert Poole," said his mother. "You don't suppose he was very anxious to let folks know that he had been up in Peckham Hollow getting moonshine whisky, do you? No, the less said about that, the better he liked it! You may be sure he kept a shut

mouth about any pony-cart. Anyhow, you know, he never had been very sure there was one."

"But Uncle Mitt?" asked Jimmy.

"Uncle Mitt didn't have a good enough right to any of those three things, the pony-cart, the bicycle, or the sack of potatoes, to make much fuss about them, had he?" said Jimmy's mother. "Of course he was as astonished as he could be, when he found them gone, and he spent a lot of time inquiring around cautiously to see if he could ever hear about them. But he never heard a thing."

"Why didn't the horse-thief take out his pistols and go right after the father?" inquired Jimmy.

"Because dawn had come by that time, and it was more important for him not to be seen, than to get back the pony and the horses."

"Oh!" said Jimmy. "Yes, I see." . . .

That night, after he had gone to bed, his mother heard a sudden trampling around of bare feet overhead, and Jimmy's voice came ringing down the stairs. "Oh, say, Mother! Did they get the horses out of the barn in time?"

"Yes," she shouted back, "all but the old black mare.

She got so much smoke in her lungs she had to be shot. But she was awfully old and she had asthma like everything. They'd only been keeping her because she had been so faithful. So maybe it was just as well to have her out of the way. Anyhow, they had a good rug made for the sleigh out of her skin."

The Angry Polar Bear

Jimmy came charging in from school, shouting, "A dog, and some sand, and a polar bear and—and an elephant, and some water."

While his mother was thinking over this, he went off to get some bread and butter. When he came back, chewing hard, he added thickly, "And a little boy."

"Oh, that one!" she said. "The one about the little boy who lived quite close to the Zoölogical Garden, so that he used to go and play there, the way you play in our yard." The tone of her voice showed Jimmy that the story was beginning.

One day this little boy had been digging in the sand-pile with the other children, but he noticed that his

dog wasn't having much fun out of that; so he went off to have a game of hide-and-seek. His dog was a little fox-terrier who could play hide-and-seek as well as anybody—in fact, better than most, for he could smell you out, no matter where you hid. The little boy was used to this, and knew how to find hiding-places for himself, and that day he found a specially good one, between a hedge of young spruces and the high iron fence that ran all around the Zoölogical Garden.

He waited and waited there and wondered why his dog didn't come to find him. And then it seemed to him that he heard a lot of screaming and shouting and running around. He poked his head out a little between the spruce branches, and what did he see? The polar bear had somehow broken out from his cage and was coming down the path!

All the visitors were running as fast as they could, toward the gate, and as the little boy looked, the last of them scrambled through, and one of the keepers slammed it shut and bolted it. Then the keeper, too, ran like a whitehead, and dodged into the open door of the monkey house and banged that shut after him.

There was the little boy squeezed in between the

spruce bushes and the palings, with the polar bear just beyond the hedge. It was lucky for him that there wasn't anywhere for him to run to, for in that first minute he was so scared he'd have screamed and run if he'd seen an open door. But there wasn't any. And anyhow he was so scared that he could hardly breathe, let alone run. What got him out of the worst of the scare, was his dog's cold nose, stuck into his hand. He looked down and there was the poor little terrier, shivering himself almost out of his skin. They snugged up together and watched the bear through the bushes.

Do you know, they stopped being scared almost right away? For the bear was enjoying himself so much, it did your heart good to see him. He'd been shut up in that cage so long, with that same old cement floor and that same little old pool of dead water, that he'd forgotten there was anything else in the world. It seemed too good to be true to him, to be walking up and down gravelly paths and over soft grass and sharpening his claws on trees. For he seemed to take the greatest comfort in that. Every time he came to a tree, he would rear up, strike his claws into it, and

rip them down. The long flakes of bark would fairly fly through the air. The little boy could feel all over him, how it hit the right spot for the bear, like scratching a mosquito bite for a little boy. And he couldn't feel scared of the bear when he saw him having such a good time. Anyhow, he thought, the bear wasn't hungry, for he'd had all the breakfast he wanted, and he wasn't mad at anybody, for he hadn't seen a soul. What would he want to go hunting round in the spruce bushes for, to find a little boy and his dog? He just wanted to be let alone. And it wasn't the little boy or his dog that would be bothering him!

All this made the little boy less and less afraid, and he stuck his head out further between the branches and laughed to himself to see the polar bear sauntering up one path and down another, swinging his head and sniffing the air, stopping to stare at the peacocks, or looking in for a minute at the pelicans; and every once in a while hauling himself up on his hind legs to rip some more long flakes of bark off a tree.

"But," said Jimmy, interrupting the story, "polar

bears can't know anything about that. There *aren't* any trees up where they live."

"That's why he enjoyed it so, of course, like one of us tasting a really-truly ripe pineapple for the first time; or like a boy from Brazil coasting down a snowy hill."

"Oh!" said Jimmy. "Oh, yes, of course!" And he settled down while his mother continued.

Now the monkey house where the last keeper had dodged in, was on one side of the spruce bushes, and the elephant house was on the other. The polar bear, exploring all the country, back and forth, strolled up along the palings in front of the elephant yard, and was just casting his eye over the litter of hay on the ground when, through the door of the elephant house, out rolled Mr. Elephant himself, come to stretch his legs a little in the yard.

You never saw anybody so astonished as that polar bear! He froze to the spot, one eye glued to the space between two palings; and he stared at the elephant so hard the little boy was afraid his eye would drop

out. You see he'd been shut up for years and years in his own cage, never seeing a living creature except the keepers and the sight-seers, and of course none of them looked in the least like an elephant.

"And," said Jimmy, "even if he had remembered what it was like before he was in his cage, he'd never have seen an elephant up at the North Pole."

Certainly *not!* He could hardly believe his eyes now. He was saying to himself—you could see it in the surprised way he stood there, his legs all sprawled out—he was saying: "Am I dreaming? Can I be awake? What did I eat for supper last night?"

At first the elephant didn't notice anything special. He walked up and down, sort of picking his teeth with a straw, and talking softly to himself. He was wondering where all the sight-seers had gone. He depends on them for peanuts, you know, and crackers. He had been very young when he was caught and couldn't remember a thing before his life in his yard

there in the Zoo. And the biggest part of his life was the peanut-bringing sight-seer. He was very clever, the way elephants are, and he knew all the ins and outs of sight-seers, and how to get the most peanuts out of them, no matter what sort they were. But he was almost as astonished as the polar bear, when he caught sight of the big white shape, leaning up against the palings gazing in at him.

The little boy had to put both hands over his mouth to keep from laughing as he saw the elephant bring up short, stick his head out and stare down at the bear, like a school-teacher looking over his specs. He was saying to himself, the elephant was: "Well, I thought I knew all the varieties. I've seen 'em in brown overcoats and in green and purple and in blue, but I never saw one in such a thick white coat, nor with such a funny-looking long nose. Where does he keep his peanuts, I wonder. That coat doesn't look as if it had any pockets." But on the general chance, he rolled over a little closer to the bear, and stuck out his trunk invitingly.

It gave the bear a turn to have that great hill of a thing start toward him, but though polar bears are

very stupid, they are not cowards; so he stood his ground, waiting to see what would happen next. What did happen was the elephant's trunk, stuck out between the palings close to his face, the wet, red inside of it, all quivery and slimy. It didn't scare him! But it made him feel rather queer, the way you feel when you start to pick up an angleworm.

"*I* don't," said Jimmy, "I'd just as soon pick them up as anything." His mother knew he wouldn't, but boys always have to say that.

Well, anyhow, it being the first time the polar bear had ever seen anything like that, it did make him feel qualmish, and he stepped back a bit, in rather a hurry. The elephant was disappointed and drew in his trunk to consider. He'd often seen visitors draw back, the first time he offered his trunk, and afterward get quite used to it. So he thought this visitor was only a little nervous and needed to be encouraged. He went closer to the bars and put out his trunk as far

as he could stretch it, right up in front of the bear's very nose. This was too much. The bear was disgusted, lifted up his great claw and raked it down one side of the trunk as if it were a tree. He made three long scratches, not very deep, but plenty deep enough to hurt like Sam Hill. The elephant let out a scream that shook the little boy clear down to his diaphragm, and went into the air like a cat having a fit. You see he'd been petted and fussed over and cared for so well all his life, that it wasn't just his trunk that was hurt. It was his feelings. He was so mad that anybody should treat *him* like that, that he felt as if he should explode. First he hauled off and came charging down at the bear like an express-train. But the heavy iron palings held firm and he only gave himself a frightful knock on the head. He tried that again and again, and when he finally saw he couldn't bang the palings down, he was frantic! He squealed and screamed and tore around his yard, bang-whanging against everything in it, and tossing the loose hay around like a tornado.

What made the little boy giggle again, was the way the polar bear took all this. For all the bear knew, you see, this was just the usual way animals with two tails

acted. So he backed off a little, and sat down to watch, just as *interested*. You could see he was saying to himself: "Now I never dreamed there were creatures with habits like this! Live and learn. What an education it is to travel and go around in the world and see things for yourself!"

But all of a sudden the elephant stopped dead still in his tracks and stood with his head cocked to one side, thinking. You see he really had a head to think with, and he had just remembered that. He was thinking: "This is getting me nowhere. Let us consider this question, calmly."

And he considered it so calmly that the polar bear thought he had gone to sleep, standing up. He moved up closer to the bars to see if the two-tailed animal shut its eyes when it went to sleep standing up.

At this, the little boy could see the elephant's eyes twinkle; but he didn't move a muscle of his trunk, nor wink an eyelash. Then after a while, as though it were nothing to him whether the bear was there or not, he began to wave one big ear to and fro, reflectively; and, by and by, to stroll around a little, to and fro, up and down, getting a little nearer to the bear all the

He whipped out his trunk and wound it around the bear's ear.

time, though not seeming to. He was bound he'd teach that bad-mannered sight-seer a lesson, if it was the last thing he *ever* did!

He'd take a bit of hay and wind it up into his mouth, absent-mindedly, and scratch his ear, and sigh, and stop short to look down, with his ears cocked as if he saw something very interesting on the ground. He did this last so often that the polar bear wondered what it could be that the elephant was staring at, and stuck his long nose and the fore part of his head in between the palings to try and see.

This was the elephant's chance. He gave one lurch forward, whipped out his trunk, and wound it around the bear's ear, as if he were going to pull it out by the roots. Of course he couldn't do *that,* but he must have stretched it several inches before his trunk slipped and he fell over backward. Then he picked himself up in a hurry, scrambled back to the wall of his house and leaned up against it to laugh.

For there was the maddest bear carrying on in front of his house you ever saw. He was that much madder than the elephant had been! He stood up on his hind legs, about a mile tall, and roared and yelled at the top

of his voice, and reached in through the bars, scrabbling with his forepaws to reach the elephant, and dancing up and down with his hindpaws. And the more he roared and scrabbled and jumped up and down, the weaker the elephant got with laughing. He had to fan himself with his trunk and his ears. For the polar bear kept it up and *kept* it up. He was just crazy, you see, and not having any real brains to think with, like the elephant, he couldn't invent any trick to play. All he could do was to glue himself to the bars, and reach in farther, and yell louder, and jump up and down faster.

This gave the little boy an idea. He scooted quick to the monkey house and knocked on

the door, and told the keepers now was their chance. They had ropes all ready, and came running up behind the bear, and got a slip-noose over his head before he knew it. Then another one around his forepaws, and with this they could throw him on his back and hog-tie him. Some more scurried off to get the four-wheeled push-cart they use to carry around transplanted trees. They pushed the bear up a plank, on to this, and wheeled him back to his cage.

The elephant was ever so interested in all this, and stopped laughing to come down to the bars to watch. "So that's the way they travel, when they wear white overcoats," he was saying to himself. "Well, I hope the next one will have more peanuts and better manners."

There was a rather long pause.

"But I said there was to be some water in it," said Jimmy.

"There was. The pool in the polar bear's cage. While the men were wheeling him back toward it, the little boy took the pail he'd used for playing in the sand,

and ran ahead and scooped it full of the water from the pool. He thought he'd like to take it home for a souvenir."

Anchor House

As he was brushing his teeth at night, Jimmy suddenly remembered. "You haven't told me a story for three whole days, and the things I want in it have piled up and *piled* up."

"Let's hear what they are."

"A little boy and a ship's anchor, and a library full of old books and a woodchuck and a spider and a bed and a doorknob."

"Not on your life," said his mother. "That's three days' worth. There are too many."

"All right I'll leave out the spider," said Jimmy. "I didn't want him in so very much, anyhow. It would probably turn out that he spun his web over the mouth of a cave and saved the life of somebody hiding inside. And I'd hate that."

As I said before, Jimmy's choice of what to put in a story is not so wild as it seems. One of his fixed aims is to avoid certain stale old combinations that make him groan in printed stories. For instance he has not yet put into a story either a millionaire or an orphan child; but if he did, nothing could make him put them both into the same story. He would be afraid that the orphan couldn't help turning out to be the long-lost child of the millionaire. He would do anything to prevent such a thing as that, of course, and if he felt he had to have such people in a story, I'm sure he would put the millionaire in along with a cake of soap, and have the orphan child in the same story with a hippopotamus.

In this case his mother asked him indignantly what made him think her capable of getting out that old cave-and-spider-web combination. But he persisted: "Well, if he didn't do that, I bet he'd tell all about how many joints he has in his front legs and what spiders eat in winter. And I'd hate that worse. No, we'll leave the spider out."

"Well, without the spider it is of course the story about the little boy whose brothers and sisters got the

measles; and the family weren't sure whether he'd been exposed, so they sent him off to Anchor House, which was the name of his uncle's house down by the seashore."

"Was it in school time?" asked Jimmy.

"Yes, right in the first part of May."

"Didn't he have the luck!" commented Jimmy.

Oh, I don't know [his mother answered]. Anchor House was way out on a sandy point, with no children in any of the farmhouses around. His uncle was a retired sea-captain, pretty deaf and awfully fat, who only wanted to read his newspaper all day and snore all night. And the old cook who did for them was as cross as two sticks and hated little boys in the kitchen. So he had to invent games to play all by himself. Mostly he played with the books in the library. They had belonged to his uncle's wife's father, who'd been a minister long ago, and they were all full of theological facts that aren't so any more; and nobody ever thought of reading them. The little boy played blocks with them. They were big and thick and made splendid

walls for forts. His uncle didn't care what he did and the old cook didn't know anything about it because she never went into the wing of the house where the library was. It was a good way from the kitchen and she had rheumatism in her knee.

Well, one night the little boy woke up and remembered that he had carried a lot of books out on the side porch to build a rampart there, and hadn't taken them back in. It was a nice clear night, but you never know for sure about the weather, and he thought he'd better go down and carry them back into the library in case of rain. It was lovely and warm, so he didn't need anything but his pajamas; and he'd been going barefoot daytimes, so he didn't stop for slippers. He trotted downstairs and along the hall that led to the wing, into the library, and out on the side porch. The books were a little damp already from the night air, so he was glad he had come down. He carried them into the library, armful after armful—dozens and dozens of armfuls, it seemed to him. It took him a long, long time, even though he didn't try to put them back on the shelves, but just piled them up anywhere. He

was pretty tired and sleepy when he finally got the last one in, and started back up the stairs.

He was yawning and stretching, and thinking how nice it would be to get into bed and snuggle down and doze off, when he noticed that the door of his room stood open. This gave him rather a turn, for he was sure that he had shut it very carefully. But that was nothing compared to what he found when he stepped inside his room.

For his bed was gone.

Yes, just like that. The headboard was leaning up against the wall and the footboard lay on the floor, and the bedclothes were tossed over the back of a chair, but the springs and mattress had disappeared. Not a sign nor a smitch of them was to be seen.

Of course the little boy knew at once that this couldn't be so. Whatever else might get carried away out of a house at night, it wouldn't be a *bed*. That was just about the biggest and heaviest and hardest-to-carry thing there was in any house. And what would anybody want it for! Of course it must be right there, still.

So he went out into the hall, shut his door behind him, waited a minute, and then opened it quick, expecting surely to see his bed all there, just as he'd left it.

But it wasn't; only just the headboard leaning up against the wall, and the footboard lying on the floor.

You can't imagine how *queer* the little boy felt. Not scared, for there wasn't anything to be scared of. But so queer-feeling that he sat down quick in a chair.

"Let me think," he said to himself. "Let me *think*."

But everything he tried to think was perfectly impossible. How *could* his bed be gone, and he only away for a few minutes from his room, and not a soul awake in the house? And anyhow, why would anybody *want his bed?* Burglars didn't steal beds any more than they stole kitchen stoves.

At this he gave a start. Maybe they had stolen the kitchen stove. He ran down the stairs and into the kitchen. But no, there it stood in the dim starlight, nicely blacked, the way old Mary always left it, with no more notion of stirring than the big anchor, half buried in the lawn, that his Uncle Peter had brought there from his last ship.

Well, if the stove was still there, maybe his bed was.

He ran back upstairs, and dashed to open the door. No, it wasn't.

Good gracious! Now he was really a little scared. He decided he would go and tell Uncle Peter and find out—— Oh, mercy! Suppose that Uncle Peter had disappeared, too, like the bed! This did scare him really and truly, so that he could barely stagger across the hall to his uncle's door, and turn the knob.

Uncle Peter always kept a night-light burning, and by its light the little boy could see him plainly, oh, so beautifully, comfortably asleep, as only deaf people can sleep, and snoring so loudly and so enjoyingly, as only old sea-captains can snore. It made the little boy all right again, just in a minute, to look at him. Nothing much could be the matter with Uncle Peter hitting the pillow like that.

He drew a long breath, stepped out again into the hall, and shut the door behind him. It would be a sin to wake anybody who was having such a sleep as that. But all the same, it didn't get him back his bed.

Then he had another idea, that explained everything perfectly. This was all a dream, and he'd wake up in the morning in his bed just as usual. That was the

way all stories in books ended. The best thing for him to do was to turn over, curl up, drop off to sleep more soundly and——

But, how could he do all that, without any bed to do it in?

Mercy! This was getting worse and worse. He put his hand up to his head to see if it were still on his neck, and in the right place. It was. But that was all the good it did him.

Of course he could have wrapped the bedclothes around him and lain down on the floor; but although he wasn't really scared . . . not *really* scared, he wouldn't have lain down between that headboard and footboard, not for a million dollars. Suppose whatever it was that had carried off the bed should carry him off to the same place. Not, of course you know, that he really believed for a minute that his bed was gone. How could it be?

He began to feel a little chilly and went in to get his blanket. The phosphorescent hands of his alarm clock showed him that it was nearly three o'clock. It would soon be day. He had an idea. He'd take his blanket and go outdoors for the rest of the night. He'd never

seen dawn begin, and all the nature books said that the animals get out and play more and move around more just at dawn than at any other time. He wrapped the blanket around him and started out of the front door to go down to a big rock, by the brook. There were woodchucks in the field beyond. Maybe they'd come out to feed when it was light. He was sure of *one* thing! He wouldn't miss seeing them from dropping off to sleep. He felt as though he never, never would sleep again. If, as a matter of fact, he wasn't sound asleep all this whole time!

As he stepped down the front path, he saw some-

thing white lying there. And what do you suppose it was? The knob of his door. He recognized it because it was cracked in a funny way with lines that made a triangle. He stooped over it to make sure, but you'd better believe he didn't pick it up, or touch it. No, sir! All this was too queer for *him*. He stepped wide around it, left it lying there and kept turning his head over his shoulder as he went on down the path. It wouldn't have surprised him to see it begin to roll along after him. But he was pretty sure that he could run faster than a door-knob—although of course he had never tried.

It seemed awfully good to get away from the house altogether and out on the rock, where he lay down with his blanket. The rock was hard and humpy, but he loved all the humps. They felt so natural and real. In a few minutes, as his eyes got used to the light, he saw that dawn was almost there. The sky was lighter in the east and the trees and bushes began to look gray. A big maple tree stood over the rock, and he heard a bird rustling in the leaves. By and by it said, "Queet! Queet!" in a sleepy little voice.

And then right under where the little boy lay, not

Then as she began to eat, they began to play.

two feet from his face, he saw something move and come slowly out of a hole. It was a woodchuck's head! It dodged back so quickly that the little boy was afraid he had moved and frightened it, though he had scarcely breathed for fear of making a noise. But in a minute, out it popped again and looked all around very cautiously. Then the whole woodchuck came out, and behind it, four baby woodchucks, little soft, furry, gray things, all round and roly-poly. They toddled along after their mother for a few steps. Then as she began to eat, they began to play. Just like a family of puppies or kittens, rolling each other over and over, squealing and running around, or standing up on their hind legs to push each other. The little boy could hardly keep back his laughing, to see them, they were so jolly. After a while, their mother took them down to the brook for a drink, and he could hear them going on with their fun, pushing for the best place, falling into the water, squalling and shaking themselves, and starting another rough-house the minute one was finished. They came racing back up the slope to the rock, bouncing along, with their mother back of them. Now

it was almost daylight, so the little boy could really see them. He had never seen wild animals close at hand before, when they were not frightened or angry, and he never forgot the gay look of fun on their bright little faces, as they came scampering along toward him.

Something dreadful happened then. A shadow (or what the little boy had taken for a shadow) sprang up from beside the rock, pounced on the first of the baby woodchucks and pinned it to the ground, with a horrid noise of snarling and craunching, like the noise a cat makes over a mouse. The big woodchuck heard it too, made one great jump and landed on top of the animal, whatever it was, weasel perhaps, that had killed her baby. And then there was a frightful fight, a snarling, snapping, growling ball rolling over and over, with sharp yells when somebody got bitten, and a gnashing click-clack of angry teeth, that sounded to the little boy ever so much fiercer than the roaring of any lion at the Zoo.

The little boy grabbed up a stick and stood over them, trying to see where to hit, for he didn't want to

hurt the woodchuck. For a minute they didn't notice him, they were so set on tearing each other to pieces, but they must have caught a glimpse of him, for all of a sudden whiz! flash! in a jiff they had both vanished, the woodchuck back into the hole, and the weasel into the bushes. There was the little boy, left alone, with the sun just coming up and the poor little woodchuck lying with its head bent under it, all limp.

He picked it up to be sorry for it, and thought he felt its heart still beating. Oh! Perhaps he could save its life and have it for a pet. He left his blanket on the rock and ran back into the house, to the kitchen. There was an old box there, with wire netting on one side, that somebody had brought a setting hen in, the day before. He lifted the top, laid the woodchuck in on the straw, and got a cup of water to sprinkle on its face, in case it had fainted.

Old Mary came in as he was running back to the box, and when he told her about it, she advised him to try to see if they couldn't get a little milk down the poor thing's throat. By the time they had some milk in a saucer, with a rag to let it drip from, the wood-

chuck had come to, had got up on its feet and backed off into a corner. The little boy was so glad it wasn't dead that he knelt down in front of the box to put his face close up to the netting to see how the new pet looked. But the woodchuck sprang at him so savagely, clicking its teeth so horridly that he pulled away in a hurry. He felt very sorry to have the little creature hate him; but of course it didn't surprise him. Just caught and in prison, it couldn't know who was its friend. But he'd tame it! He'd be so good to it, it would have to learn to love him!

That's what he told his uncle at the breakfast table, where he set the box with the little captive, beside him. His uncle said that he didn't think anybody ever *had* tamed a woodchuck; but the little boy was sure he could.

Well, he certainly did his best. For the next two days he didn't think of another thing. He sat right beside the cage hour after hour, so that the little wild thing would get used to him. He tried everything he could think of, to make it eat, from fresh clover to angleworms and sugar. But it wouldn't even look at any of the food, and snarled and jumped wickedly at

his hand whenever he put something new into the box. And when he sat still and looked in lovingly at it, it would glare back at him, hating him so that the little boy could scarcely stand it.

Of course not eating anything, it soon grew weak, and could barely stand on its feet. But even lying down and panting for breath, it still had strength enough to stare hatingly at the little boy if he came near.

The second night after he'd caught it, he couldn't get to sleep for thinking of it, and finally got up to light a candle to look at it again. It was crouched together in a corner, its fur every which way, looking miserably sick, but as the little boy came up with his candle, it staggered to its feet and made a feeble little spring toward him, gnashing its teeth and glaring its eyes. Then it fell over weakly on its side. But still it stretched its neck around to keep its hot eyes on the little boy.

He remembered then how he had seen it playing and joking so happily with its brothers and sisters. He picked up the box in a great hurry and ran with all his might out to the big rock. There he opened the box,

took the little woodchuck out and laid it down on the ground in front of the hole. As soon as it felt the earth under it, it struggled up to its feet, and without once looking at Peter, it let itself slowly down into the hole. The last the little boy saw was a tiny, black-striped hind leg, trembling with eagerness, as the little wild baby went home.

Jimmy drew a long breath. "I'm glad he let him go," he said softly, and fell into a dreaming silence.

His mother started to move away, but was recalled by an indignant yell from Jimmy. "But what about that *bed!*" His eyes were fairly flashing fire.

"Oh!" said his mother. "That turned out not to be interesting at all. One of the neighbors, going home late at night, had had an automobile accident around the turn of the road, and his wife sprained her ankle. They came up to Uncle Peter's house to ask for a bed-spring and mattress to carry her home on, and Uncle Peter stuck his head out of his door, to say sure, they could have the one in the little bedroom on the right-hand side of the landing. They made a mistake and

took the left-hand room. That was all. And as for the door-knob, that was loose, and came off in the hand of one of the men and he was so excited he didn't think about it till he got downstairs and out on the path."

The Coal-Scuttle

"There's time before dinner," said Jimmy, "and I haven't had one today."

"All right," said his mother. "What flavor'll you have?"

"Well, I want a little boy in it, and a coal-scuttle——"

"Oh, Jimmy!" said his mother. "Do you always have to have a little boy in them?"

"What would anybody want a story without a little boy in it for?"

"Just this once!" begged his mother.

"Well, just this once then. A coal-scuttle and a poplar tree and a cow and a cat."

"Funny!" said his mother. "I was thinking about that one this morning, and wondering what would have

happened if Maria hadn't lost her temper so. For you must have Maria in it, too."

"Who's Maria?"

"The cook in the house where the coal-scuttle lived."

"Oh, yes, of course!" conceded Jimmy.

"But it really didn't start with Maria, though she thought it did. It started the night before, when the cat didn't catch the mouse she expected to, in the barn, and came into the kitchen just starved. The coal-scuttle was feeling unusually cheerful because there was no coal in it, that morning. You've no idea how coal weighs down on a coal-scuttle's spirits. It's such silent stuff, coal is; never has a word to say for itself. Except once it gets in the stove and begins to crackle and make jokes. But of course the scuttle never could hear what it said in the stove.

"Well, that morning the scuttle didn't have a lump in it, because Maria had used the last piece to get a good fire going to cook the veal cutlets. She'd put the extra cutlet she'd bought for her little boy on the corner of the——"

"I thought you said there wasn't going to be any little boy," said Jimmy.

"There isn't. The lady that Maria worked for was very nervous and couldn't stand children, so Maria boarded her little boy around the corner with her cousin's family. But once a week, Saturdays, he came up to visit his mother. Maria had insisted on that. The lady she worked for usually arranged things so she wasn't there much Saturdays except for meals." At last the story was fairly launched.

Now, as I said, the coal-scuttle was very cheerful that morning, and felt sorry for the cat when she trailed in, empty as a drum, and not a drop of milk in her saucer. Wishing to be helpful, it murmured under its breath, "Corner of the pantry shelf—corner of the pantry shelf," and then looked the other way as the cat moved over in that direction. Maria decided just then to go down cellar for some more coal, and picked up the scuttle. She got to the cellar door, remembered that she hadn't put the cover on the potatoes and turned around. And there was the cat streaking it across the floor with the extra veal cutlet in her mouth.

Maria was so mad she was almost choked for a

minute. Then she screeched out, "Drop that! Drop that!" and started after the cat. But her ankle never had been really cured after that time she sprained it getting down out of the cherry tree, and she couldn't run very fast. Not so fast, anyhow, as the cat, who

went scooting down the path in the back yard toward the alley. The veal cutlet dragged a little in the dust, but that didn't bother her very much, for she was used to carrying her kittens after their hind legs dragged. Only not usually so fast, of course.

Maria came yelling out of the kitchen door, waving

the coal-scuttle in the air, getting madder every minute. The cat went through the bars of the gate in the back-yard fence, and down the alley, Maria and the coal-scuttle clattering on behind, yelling, "Drop that! Drop that!" Maria was, I mean. The coal-scuttle was having a lovely time, because all this was such a nice change for it. They have very monotonous lives, as a rule, coal-scuttles do.

But it got more change and excitement than it bargained for, in a minute. Maria was so wild by this time that if she could have exploded into a thousand pieces, it would have been a relief to her. But she couldn't. She wore old-fashioned corsets and laced them up tight. She saw she never could catch the cat, and anyhow, who but a cat would *want* to eat a veal cutlet that had been dragged down a back alley! But she thought she might perhaps get even with the cat by throwing the coal-scuttle at her head. So she did. The coal-scuttle sailed through the air, with its handle out stiffly, trying to guess where it was going to land. But if it had guessed a thousand years, it never could have guessed right.

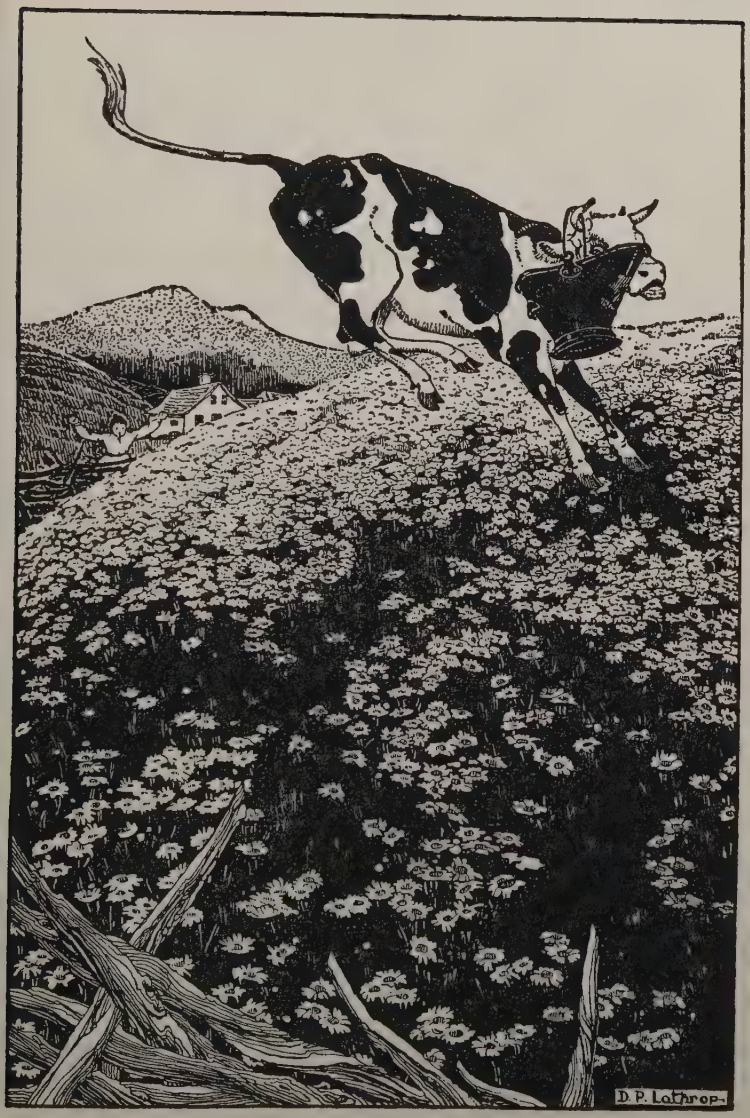
For at that very minute the Morrison's young heifer

was just coming down a side alley. She'd broken through that weak place in the fence again, though Mr. Morrison had told Willie Morrison to mend it a thousand times, if he had once. And she was moseying along, slow and comfortable, not dreaming that Maria and the cat and the veal cutlet and the coal-scuttle were tearing down the other alley at right angles to the one she was on.

Especially the coal-scuttle. For just as the heifer's head stuck out into Maria's alley, the coal-scuttle coming down in a curve, hooked its handle neatly over the heifer's horn, the one that was sort of crooked, anyhow.

Well, sir, you never saw anything like the doings there were in that alley, when the heifer felt the coal-scuttle banging her in the nose. She acted as if a bomb had exploded inside her. Three or four bombs, to be exact, for she exploded three or four times before she went down the alley that led out of town into Norbert's beech-woods.

The way she went was a caution! From the noise, people thought it must be the stone-breaking machine that had got loose and was running away. In about



In about three jumps she had come out into the big field.

three jumps she had come out into the big field that lies in front of the woods, and she went across that in about three jumps more. The coal-scuttle was sort of scared by this time, but there was nothing to do but to hold on and hope for the best.

The woods were simply terrible because the heifer had got herself so worked up she didn't know what she was doing nor which way she was going. And anyhow, the way the coal-scuttle hung down, she couldn't have had a good look at anything, if she'd been ever so quiet in her mind. For a while she wrestled with the trees and bushes, till the coal-scuttle thought that all was lost and it might as well give up the ship. But, remembering the stern iron stuff it was made of, it tried to live up to the best traditions of the family, and to remember that "while there's life," and so forth.

There was plenty of life in the heifer, believe me, for when she happened to stumble into a wood-road that led uphill, she tore along it as fast as though she'd been resting herself till then. But it was awfully steep uphill, and she was nearly tired out. All of a sudden, with a cough, she stopped short, stuck her four legs out and hung down her head, perfectly used up.

"Here's my chance," thought the coal-scuttle. "Discretion is the better part; and so forth. There's no sense in being foolhardy."

So it let itself slip gently off over the tip of the hanging-down horn and rolled to one side in the ferns. The heifer was so worn out that for a minute she didn't realize that she had lost the devil that had been tormenting her. When she did, she gave a loud "Bla-a-at!" flung up her head, and galloped off down the road as fast as she had come up.

There lay the coal-scuttle in the ferns, very glad to be quiet for a while, as you can imagine.

But it didn't have much time to rest, because down the road came Martin Hellyer, the man who had just built himself a shack up in the clearing above Bartlett's farm. He lived there all by himself, doing day's works once in a while, but mostly going fishing. He was going down to town that morning to buy some tobacco, but when he saw the coal-scuttle there in the ferns, he stopped short and whistled! It *was* a funny thing to find up there in the woods. Then he looked all around. There wasn't a soul in sight. Nothing but the heifer's tracks in the road. And of course no-

body would ever dream that any cow would bring a coal-scuttle up to the woods.

"Well," said Martin to himself, "I might as well have it as anybody." So he picked it up and went back to his shack with it.

He didn't burn coal, of course, but he had an idea. And right off, he began to act out his idea. He took the scuttle over his arm and went through the woods to the field where the oldest Bartlett boy was plowing. Before he got there, he picked up a lot of pine cones so that the scuttle was half full. Then he went and leaned on the fence, and said, "Hello!" to the Bartlett boy, and asked if he had seen his dog up that way. As a matter of fact, he had left his dog tied up in the shack, but he wanted to get the Bartlett boy to stop work and talk a little. And he did. It never took much to get that Bartlett boy to stop work.

"Hello!" he said, "what you got a coal-scuttle for? Going to put in steam heat? Haw! Haw! Haw!"

"No, not yet," said Martin, grinning and taking it as a joke, "I got this down to town today. A man gave it to me for helping carry the piano into a house

that the family were moving into. I thought I might's well have it as not."

Yes, I know that wasn't exactly the truth, but Martin almost had to invent *some*thing. Would anybody have believed him if he had said he had found a perfectly good coal-scuttle beside a wood-road? Anyhow, he was very careful about getting suspected of anything because, coming as a perfect stranger to the neighborhood, he knew that everybody was wondering who he was and why he was there. He had heard that somebody said maybe he had broken out of prison and was hiding. He was hiding, all right, but he'd never been in jail or done anything to get there. He was a sailor, and as his ship was anchored off from shore near Brooklyn, the second mate had said something too mean for Martin to stand. So Martin just knocked him over the rail of the ship into the water. The second mate could swim perfectly well, and wasn't a bit hurt, but Martin thought he'd better not take any chances; so while the other sailors were hauling up the mate on one side of the ship, he let himself down the other side and swam to shore. He had his three months' wages with him, and put his pocket-

book inside his cap to keep it dry. When he got ashore, he thought he might as well keep out of sight of the mate for a while. Anyhow, he was tired of sailoring. He'd been brought up on a farm and he thought he'd like to try living in the country for a change.

So that was all there was to that. But of course he didn't want to go around telling everybody about that mate, for fear it would get back to Brooklyn. I only told it to you to explain how he really was all right, but it might be better if you didn't repeat it too much.

He said to the plowboy now: "I thought I could pick up pine cones in it. They're so good for starting fires when you're in a hurry."

"Yes, so they be," said the Bartlett boy, and went back to his plowing, for he saw his father coming across the next field.

Well, after that, Martin paraded around with his coal-scuttle where all the neighbors could see him, till they got used to it, and would say, "There goes Martin with his pine-cone scuttle." They kept right on saying that, long after Martin had stopped putting cones in it. He'd sometimes pass right by them as they went

out to milk in the morning, and they'd say, "Hello there, Mart," and never look at his coal-scuttle.

If they had, they'd have seen that it had three or four cups of nice warm milk in it. For that was Martin's idea. The only thing he lacked to make him quite happy was some milk once in a while. And of course, it wasn't worth his while to keep a cow just for the little he'd use, was it? Till he caught sight of the coal-scuttle, he hadn't known how to work it. For if the neighbors had seen him around their night-pastures with a pan or a pail, they'd have suspected something. And you can't carry milk in a sack. But you can in a coal-scuttle. And Martin did.

Every morning or so, he'd go quietly at dawn, and milk a little from each of the Bartlett cows, and bring it home and pour it into a pan to set for cream, for he did love a little cream with his coffee. Then he'd wash the scuttle out nice and clean—all sailors are handy around the house, you know—and hang it on a branch of the poplar tree that stood in front of his shack so the sun would shine on it and keep it sweet. It was a very good plan all around.

After a pause Jimmy asked, "Was it a galvanized iron scuttle?"

"No, it was an enameled black one, with a flower in gold paint on the front. But of course that soon got rather rubbed off."

Sally's Story

One day when Jimmy came for his story his sister and his grandmother were there, and they drew lots to see who should tell it. Sally drew the longest straw and so was the story-teller of the day; but, to console the other two, Jimmy let each of them choose one of the things to be in the story. He himself chose two, but that was only fair because he was the one who invented the Made-to-Order Stories.

"I choose a little boy and lots—oh, lots of very thick glass," he said.

"I want a brass button off Captain Jones's uniform," said Granny.

"And I want a pig," said his mother; "I do like pigs."

"Just one thing more," said Jimmy: "a watch."
So Sally began.

Once upon a time there was a little boy whose father was head foreman in a factory where they manufactured glass, the heavy sheet glass that's used for sidewalks over subway passages. You've seen it. You walk along underneath and look up and see the soles of people's feet pressing up and down on the ceiling. The little boy's family lived quite close to the factory, which was a most lovely interesting place to visit, only he wasn't often allowed in—only once in a while just before closing time. He had been down there that day, right after school, hanging around, talking to the watchman at the door, but nobody invited him to go in; so after a while he decided to move on to visit awhile with old Jed Watson, who had been foreman before his father, and lived now in a little shack near the works. On the way there he saw something bright lying in the road. He picked it up, and saw it was a brass button, and put it in his pocket without thinking anything special about it.

And yet that was what started him off on all that happened. For when talk ran low at old Jed's, he got the button out and showed it to old Jed, just to have something to say. And old Jed said:

"My sakes! That must be the button that Captain Jones lost off his uniform and he's wild about it. Let's go right over and see if it isn't."

The little boy didn't know who Captain Jones was, but as they went along old Jed told him how the Elmore house (the one that has the yard running down to the river) had been taken by an old Captain on half-pay, who'd been an Indian-fighter in the West——

"Oh!" said Granny. "I meant him to be a sea-captain!"

"You never said so," said Sally, "and now he can't be, because he wasn't." That silenced Granny.

He was a West Point graduate, and had done most of his service in the West, and had the house fairly jammed with wampum and peace pipes and buffalo

skulls and goodness knows what, that made the little boy's mouth water, just to hear about. The point about the button was that the Captain only had one dress uniform left, and he thought the world of it, especially just then, because he was going to wear it to head the Decoration Day parade the next day, and being a regular-army Captain he would just as soon have paraded without his trousers as with one button off his uniform. He'd been up and down the road asking everybody had they seen his button.

He almost wept with emotion when the little boy gave him his button, but being a West Point man he choked down his feelings, wiped his eyes on his cuff, and said: "Sir, you have done me a service indeed. Let me offer an insignificant return by offering you both a cup of tea."

He explained that he always had oceans of cookies and bread-and-butter-and-honey for his tea, so they stayed. While the hired girl was getting the tea things ready on the porch, Captain Jones showed them his Indian things. He let the little boy try on *anything he liked*—moccasins, feather headdresses, deerskin trousers—and let him have a bow and arrow in one hand

He had his forefcct in the broken plates and saucers, and was gobbling up the cookies.

and a stone club in the other, all at the same time. There was a mirror there too, so he could see himself. It was *won*derful.

The Captain said he would give him his choice of any arrow there to pay for bringing back the button. Real Indian arrows, you know, made by Sioux and Apaches and such! The little boy was just trying to make up his mind which one to take when . . . Slamity! Bang! there was the frightfulest noise out on the porch. They ran out to see, and there was a huge pig, that had pushed through the fence from the neighbor's yard and smelled the cookies, and had come moseying up to get what he could. He'd tipped the whole tea tray off the table—that had been the slambang—and now he had his forefeet in the broken plates and saucers, and was gobbling up the cookies. Wasn't it awful! The little boy was so furious to see all those good cookies eaten by a *pig!* He yelled "Get out o' there!" and started on a run, waving his Indian bow in his hand.

But Captain Jones was madder still. Those were not only his cookies but his plates and saucers! He started swearing at the top of his voice, pretty bad

soldier swear-words too, and grabbed up the tea kettle to throw it at——

"That's my pig," interrupted Jimmy's mother, "and I'm not going to have boiling water thrown at him. How could *he* know that those cookies were not——"

"But the Captain's foot slipped," Sally went on, "and the tea kettle dropped right on his foot——"

"*I* put in the Captain," said Granny. "If the pig doesn't get scalded, I don't see why the Captain should."

"It was his *wooden* leg and foot," explained Sally. "I forgot to tell you that he had lost a leg in the fight with Chief Falling Leaves. And he gave the tea kettle a kick that sent it over to old Jed——"

"What had *he* done to get himself boiled alive?" asked Jimmy indignantly.

"The tea kettle was *empty,*" continued Sally. "The girl hadn't filled it yet."

"Oh," they said all three together, "why didn't you *say* so to begin with!"

"And as the pig moved on, the cookies dribbling out

of his month, old Jed snatched up the tea tray to throw at him——"

"What was the tea tray made of?" asked the mother.

"Rubber!" said Sally bitterly. "Soft, soft India rubber, if you're still afraid that pig will get hurt."

"Not at all," said the mother. "I don't care what gets thrown at him if it's not boiling water. I only thought if the tray *was* tin, it would make a lovely clatter as it hit him."

"It was, and it did," said Sally; "only I wasn't going to say so." She saw that everybody was satisfied at last, took a long breath, and went ahead.

Such a lovely clatter, the tea tray made, that it scared the pig half out of his senses. Instead of scuttling back to the hole in the fence, it galumphed off, lickety-cut, straight down toward the river.

Old Jed and the little boy didn't see anything out of the way about this, but Captain Jones gave a wild whoop, worse than anything *any*body'd said yet, and starting stumping after him, yelling over his shoulder: "The bog! He'll get stuck in the bog! Head him off!"

Old Jed and the little boy hated that pig so they didn't see why they should care *how* many bogs he got stuck in. The more the better. But when, sure enough, the pig began to squeal and wallow and sink in deeper, Captain Jones came pegging back to them, looking so scared that they were scared, too. He said, with his voice all high and nervous: "Looky here, folks; we've got to get that animal out—and double-quick, too! It belongs to my neighbor Mrs. Moffat. And if you'd ever heard Mrs. Moffat express her feelings when she's upset——"

The sweat was standing out on his bald forehead, and the little boy felt a cold trickle in his back, the Captain's eyes looked so frightened.

"She's gone downtown shopping," said the Captain, wiping off his forehead, "so we've got a chance yet. If we hurry."

"Take the hammock-rope!" yelled old Jed, starting for it on the run.

They untied the rope as fast as they could, while the little boy ran down to the corner of the street to see if he could see Mrs. Moffat coming. Nobody was in sight, and they hurried down toward the pig, Captain

Jones carrying a board. They had the little boy creep out on this, over the bog (he was the lightest of the three, of course) and get a loop of the rope around the pig's body, behind its forelegs. It was hard to do, the pig struggling and thrashing around as he did,

and the little boy got rather muddy. But finally he had it done, and crawled back to firm land.

Then they started to pull. *Jehoshaphat!* How they pulled! But it didn't get them very far, because the pig wallowed around so that the minute they stopped hauling to catch their breath, all the slack of the rope was jerked out of their hands. You see, the pig must

have weighed two hundred and fifty pounds, and that was about what the two old men and the little boy weighed, all put together.

But the Captain had a new idea. "If we only had a tree to snub the rope around!" he cried. "*I'll* tell you boys, I'll jab my peg leg into the ground hard, and you take a turn of rope around it and take up on your slack as you haul in. The friction will hold it."

So that's what they did. Of course the Captain pulled up that trouser leg beyond the knee, not to spoil his clothes for the parade next day. And working that way, hauling "Yo-ho-*heave,*" old Jed and the little boy together, and then winding the slack quick around the Captain's leg, they very soon got the pig out of the bog and on its feet. But you'd better believe they didn't take the rope off till they got it safe back to Mrs. Moffat's yard and had stopped up the hole in the fence it had come through.

"Well!" breathed Jimmy. He had been sitting forward anxiously on the edge of his chair, and now leaned back, relieved.

"Yes," said his sister, "that's just the way the little boy felt. He thought all their troubles were over then, and he was glad of it, for it hadn't been any fun hauling on that dirty pig, and expecting the widow Moffat to light into them any minute. So he said good-by to——"

"It seems queer to me," interrupted Granny, "that a seasoned old Indian-fighter who'd risked his life, risked being scalped thousands of times, should have been so afraid of what any Mrs. Moffat would——"

But both Jimmy and Sally cried out together: "No, it's not a *bit* queer. It's *perfectly* natural!"

"I would, myself!" said Jimmy understandingly.

"As a matter of fact," Sally went on, "they never even laid eyes on Mrs. Moffat. *That* wasn't what the trouble came from. But as they started to go——"

Jimmy scented danger. "He didn't forget to take that arrow the Captain promised him, did he?" he cried apprehensively.

"No. Mercy, no! How could he have forgotten such a thing as that! No, he had that all right, but when he tried to pull out his watch to see what time it was, the watch wasn't there. Somehow he'd lost it.

And it was a birthday present, and the third one he'd lost!"

"Oh, *gosh!*" groaned Jimmy sympathetically. He too is on his third watch.

Of course they thought first that he must have lost it when he crawled along on the board. Or else when they were scrabbling to pull out the pig. And you can imagine how much chance there was of finding it in all that trampled-up mud. They went to look, and poked around with sticks. But of course they didn't find it.

"Maybe you dropped it out at my house," said old Jed. "When was the last time you looked at it?"

The little boy thought and thought, and remembered it had been at the glass-works, as he stood talking to the watchman.

"Maybe you lost it then," suggested the Captain.

So the little boy and old Jed went off, looking in the road as they went.

Some little girls saw them going along, their heads bent over and sort of weaving from side to side, and

asked if they were looking for something. The little boy told them, and they said they'd help. Then a bunch of boys who'd been playing baseball in a vacant lot came along and asked what was lost, and said *they*'d help. And so on, and so on, the way people do. It was a regular procession after a while. Folks came out on their porches and called to know what was the matter. One lady said she had seen the little boy and old Jed going toward Captain Jones's house and she thought she saw something shining on the ground after they passed, right *there,* near that oak-tree. But when they looked, it was only the top of a tobacco box.

The crowd went into Jed's little shack and looked around there, too, but it was near supper time then, and they all had to go home.

So did the little boy, but he stopped at the glass-works on the way, though he didn't find the watch. He felt so badly about it he could only eat about half the supper he usually ate, and he was so afraid somebody would ask him what time it was, that he jumped every time any of the family looked at him.

"*Did* anybody ask him?" inquired Jimmy nervously.

No, nobody happened to think anything about it, because his mother had just had a letter from her sister, out in California, and she wouldn't let anybody else say a word all through supper while she was reading it aloud and telling them the news.

The little boy went out to shut up the hens, and looked very carefully all around the barn, because it had just occurred to him that *maybe* he hadn't had it with him at all, that afternoon. But he didn't find it. Then he ate one last cooky and went upstairs to bed. And as he took off his trousers, the watch fell out on his bed. He'd put it in the *back* pocket of his trousers, instead of the *front* pocket of his waist, as he thought.

"That's a good one!" said Granny. "I specially liked the part where they took up the slack of the rope around the Captain's peg leg."

"Yes, it was all *right!*" said Jimmy wistfully. "But I *wish* I'd put a whale in it. I wanted a whale in, but I forgot it till it was too late."

"Well, it was a whale of a pig, anyhow," said Sally.

The Inventive Father

It was pouring down rain and Jimmy's mother was taking advantage of it to transplant her phlox. This is a tough, dirty job, and she was muddy to the eyes, and feeling rather grim when Jimmy came skipping down the path like a brownie in oilskins.

"Say, Mother!" he shouted as he came, "I've got a beauty. Listen! A Chinaman, a burglar, a hole in the ground, and lots and lots of beads."

"Well, for mercy's sakes!" cried his mother. "You don't mean you expect me to stop in all this work and tell you a Made-to-Order Story!"

"Why, yes! I had expected you would," said Jimmy, surprised and a little hurt. "But you don't have to stop your work. You can tell as you plant. And I can tag along and listen. I could help you, too.

I could tear those roots apart as well as anybody." So he began to do that, and his mother began to tell the story, although she had a feeling from the first that something would go wrong with it.

"You must understand," she said severely, "that the Chinaman *was* the burglar. There was only one of them."

"Oh, well then," said Jimmy, "if that's so, it only counts as one thing, and I can put in another. All right. I'll put in——"

"No, you won't," said his mother. "It's too late. As like as not now you'd get in something that wasn't there. Suppose you wanted to put in a bath-tub, for instance. You couldn't. For they didn't have any bathroom. The father was too inventive."

"Whose father?"

"The little boy's, of course. Whose did you suppose?"

"Oh, yes, of course!" said Jimmy.

They didn't have any bathroom [his mother went on] because the father was so inventive; but there were

lots of other things they did have, for the same reason they didn't have that. The hole-in-the-ground was one of them. It was one of his inventions. It was meant to take the place of an ice-box. Quite a good idea, too. He thought it all out that the earth is always cooler than the air, and the deeper you dig down the cooler it is. So he worked away in their cellar for three or four Sundays, digging for all he was worth. He had a job in a real-estate office every week-day and only had his Sundays left to invent in. He made the most splendid hole, too, ever so deep; and sure enough, it *was* as cool as could be. He hung a thermometer on a string and kept it at the bottom, and when he showed the hole to visitors he would haul it up and show them how low the mercury stood.

His wife, who was a splendid cook, wanted to start in to use it right away for keeping her milk and butter. But he asked her for goodness' sakes however she expected to get them down and up again.

She said by putting them in a pail and hanging the pail on a rope, like the thermometer.

But he said, gracious no! Wasn't that like a woman, always using miserable makeshifts, instead of

thinking things through! He said he had already invented a dumb-waiter system with weights on one end of a rope that ran over a pulley. With that, he told her, she could let all her supplies down in from the top of the cellar stairs, and get them back too, without everlastingly racing up and down. "Let your head save your heels," he said, and went out to his shop in the barn and began to make the dumb-waiter.

But this was late one Sunday afternoon, and Monday morning, of course, he had to go back and real-estate. The next Sunday he started in on it again, but after an hour or so, the little boy and his mother heard him let out a whoop: "I've got it! I've got it!"

And they both thought, "There goes our dumb-waiter." They didn't say anything, though, for they thought the world of the father, even though he was so inventive.

Sure enough, in came the father, shouting: "Just as I was planing a board for the end of that contraption in the cellar, it came to me—how to make the connection in the fire-lighting machine." (The winter before he had started a machine that would light the kitchen

fire when he leaned out of bed upstairs and touched a button.)

His wife wiped the perspiration off her forehead (it was the middle of July) and said mildly, "We're using the oil-stove just now." But she saw he looked disappointed, so she went on, in a hurry, "But yes, yes, it would be lovely for next winter." He was really very nice, and she hated to hurt his feelings.

Of course there wasn't anything more said, ever, about the dumb-waiter and they had, so to speak, the hole in the cellar left on their hands. It didn't bother them much, for as a furnace was one of the things they didn't have, they hardly ever went down cellar, which was very dark, with only one small window in a corner; and they usually kept that boarded up to keep the rats out. In fact they soon forgot everything about the hole being there, and I don't know when they would ever have thought of it again, if it hadn't been for something that happened three or four months after this.

The father was out of town on business, leaving the little boy and his mother alone in the house, which he didn't much like to do as they hadn't any near neigh-

bors. But the mother wasn't timid, and never thought of being afraid. One evening, the little boy had finished doing his lessons, and the mother had finished locking up the house for the night, when just as they stood at the foot of the stairs, with everything perfectly quiet, *they heard something in the cellar.* Not a rat or a mouse, either, but a noise made by something big. They clutched at each other, and stood there, listening, too startled to budge.

It was a queer, dull, scrambling noise, like somebody stumbling around and trying to get his balance. And then—how they jumped!—a queerer noise yet, like something heavy dropping! Something quite heavy, too!

The little boy's blood all went to ice-water and ran out of the ends of his toes. At least that was the way it felt to him. But as quick as a wink his mother let go her clutch on his shoulder, tiptoed to the cellar door and locked it. She was quite a remarkable person for thinking of things. Then they both stood still and looked at each other again. There wasn't a sound from the cellar.

"What shall we *do?*" the little boy asked his mother,

without saying the words, just shaping them with his lips.

"I don't know," she whispered back at him the same way.

"Let's go for help!" mouthed the little boy.

At this she flew to the outside door to make sure that was locked. "There may be more of them outside!" she whispered.

Then the matter was settled by a frightened voice from the cellar screaming out: "Help! Help! I can't get out! I can't get out!"

In an instant the little boy and his mother knew what had happened. Whoever it was had fallen into the refrigerating hole. I should think he couldn't get out! It was more than twelve feet deep, with straight sides. It was a wonder it hadn't broken his back, except that there was soft sand at the bottom.

The little boy clapped his hands and jumped up and down. It was great to have an inventive father.

"We must go and help him," said his mother. "He may have broken a leg."

She went to the corner cupboard in the upstairs hall, took out the emergency box of bandages and things,

lighted a candle and started down the cellar stairs. The little boy went along too, two or three steps behind.

When she got to the bottom step the mother called: "I won't come any nearer till you throw up your revolver and bowie knife."

They heard somebody give a sort of gasp. Then a man's voice, very pleasant and educated, but with a little foreign accent, called up from the hole, "I regret that I haven't any revolver to throw up, madam, but here is my pen-knife."

Something bright flashed through the air and fell near them. The little boy picked it up, a plain little fifty-cent one-blader, only fit for sharpening pencils. His three-blader was lots better.

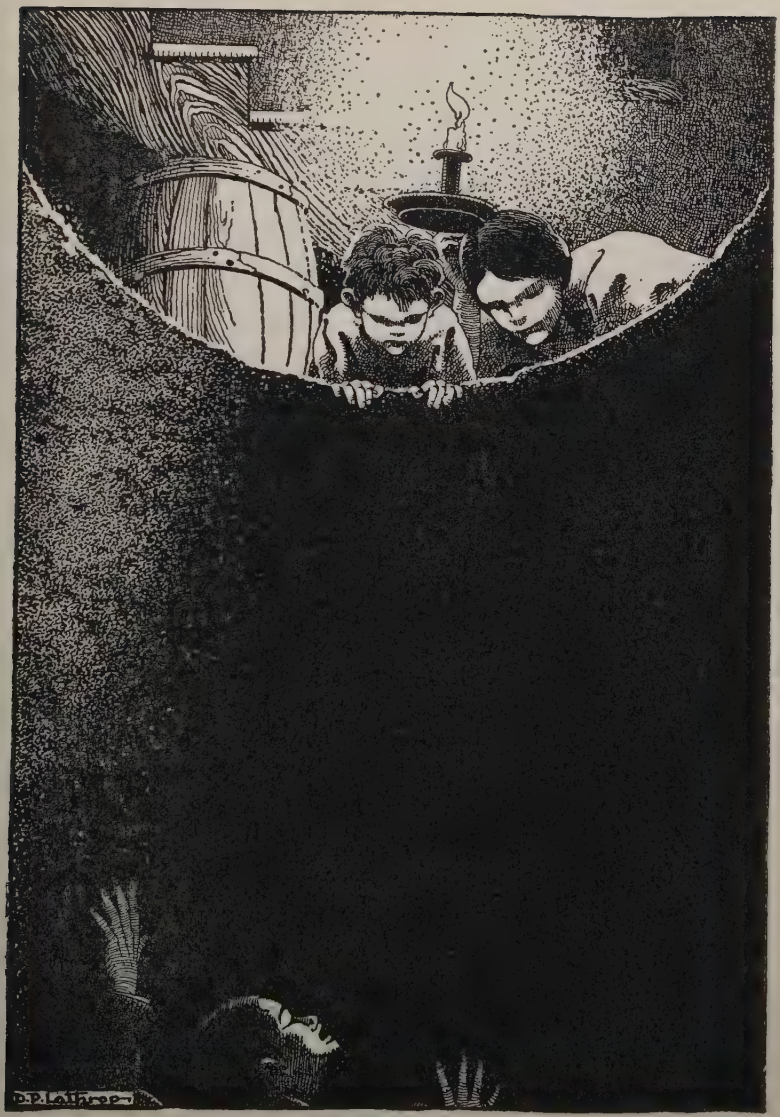
"What in the world are you doing in that hole?" called the mother.

"Nothing at all, madam, I assure you," called the voice sadly.

"But how did you ever get there?" asked the mother.

"I fell in," said the voice, even more sadly.

"But for mercy's sake," began the mother, "what were you——"



They edged up till they could just see by craning their necks.

"Yes, I know I owe you an explanation," said the voice; "but I could explain to you much better if you were where I could see you. I haven't any weapons, and even if I had, it wouldn't get me out of this hole to shoot anybody, would it?" Then he said in a sort of shout: "How under the sun did you happen to *have* such a hole in your——"

"I'll tell you about that later," said the mother severely, "after I've heard what *you* have to say!"

The little boy was almost sorry for the man in the hole. He did hate to have his mother say after he'd done something bad, that she would wait before scolding him till she had "heard what he had to say." He never had *any*thing to say.

But the man in the hole had, apparently, for he said, "If you'll only come a little closer I'll tell you all about it."

They edged up till they could just see by craning their necks, and what they saw was a neatly dressed, black-haired young man with high cheekbones, looking at them pleadingly out of black eyes that ran up at the corners. There was no doubt about it. He was a Chinaman.

"For mercy's sakes!" cried the mother, more surprised than ever. She went on looking and saw that he was very thin and slight and looked very sad and anxious.

"Did you hurt yourself when you fell?" she asked.

"No, I think not," he said. "But I'm afraid I've torn my coat dreadfully, and it's the only one I have to go to classes in."

"Oh, you're a student," she said, and then: "Don't you worry about your coat. I can mend it so it'll never show the tear."

"Yes, I'm in the Cincinnati Medical School," he said, "My second year."

"Well, you're a long way from Cincinnati," said the mother. "Whatever made you——" Then she stopped, looked at him harder and said, "I don't believe you've had anything to eat for ages."

"Well, no, not much," he said. "I had a few crackers yesterday. You see, I haven't——"

"Wait a minute," said the mother, and ran back upstairs. The little boy wasn't afraid of the Chinaman any more, but he ran back with her. It was pretty dark down there without the candle. She was flying

around the kitchen, and in a jiffy she had opened the fireless cooker, taken out the next-morning's oatmeal, all hot, had put some in a little pail with sugar and cream, snatched up a piece of string, and was running down the stairs again. She tied the string to the handle of the pail, and let it down the hole, and you ought to have seen that Chinaman eat! It made the little boy hungry to see him, although he had never thought anybody *could* eat oatmeal any time except at breakfast.

When he had finished, the mother turned over an empty keg and sat down on it. "Now," she said, "let's hear how in the world you happen to be in our cellar at this hour of night."

The Chinaman sat down, cross-legged, as though he had a long story to tell, and began: "If I don't begin at the beginning, which is very far from here, you will not be able to understand any of it. I come of a very old-fashioned family, who have always lived in the country, far from big new modern cities, and who still have—all but myself—the old, old Chinese ideas. I am the only one, for instance, who ever dreamed of leaving home to learn new things. And I never would

have thought of it, if I had not been taken as a little boy to have a broken arm set by an American doctor. My father and mother and brothers and sisters could not understand why, when I grew up, I wanted to leave China for a while and learn to be a real doctor myself. But although they are poor, old-fashioned people, they are very kind and loving, and they have done all they could to help me. So of course, when, a few weeks ago, I had a letter from my family saying—saying that . . ."

There was a long pause while Jimmy and his mother tugged at a very tough old root. Jimmy thought she had stopped talking till that was done, and when they began to plant again he said, "Yes, and then what?"

But his mother did not answer. And when Jimmy looked up into her face he gave a great start and dropped his root. "Oh, Mother! Mother, what's the matter?" he cried anxiously.

His mother sat down on a rock weakly. "It's awful," she told him. "It's more awful than you can imagine. I don't *know* how he got in their cellar. How *could* he?"

"But gosh! Mother, you can't *leave* him there!" shouted Jimmy.

"What can I do about it," she said, "if I don't know what he said to them? What *could* he have said? How under the sun could a Chinese medical student ever get into anybody's cellar? And what did he want there? I'm sure I never heard of such a thing in all my life. I simply can't *imagine* any reason."

Jimmy begged hard. "If they only had something to sit on," he said, "or a comfortable warm room to wait in—— But to leave them down cellar at night—it's terrible! And the Chinaman seemed so nice, too!"

"You don't feel any worse about it than I do," his mother told him. "Such a thing never happened to me before. But what can I do? It fairly makes me dizzy to try to imagine what possible reasons he could have for—— If he hadn't been a Chinaman, now, it might be——"

"Maybe Granny would know," said Jimmy and ran off to Granny's house while the mother went on digging. But in a few minutes he came back shaking his head soberly. "No, she says she can't imagine, either."

They stared at each other, the rain running down their faces. Neither of them could think what to do next. It was really pretty bad, you know.

Just then Carl came down the road. "Hey, there!" he yelled. "Come on up to our house. We're going to make taffy!"

Jimmy brightened at this, and turned away. Then he came back to say comfortingly to his mother: "I tell you, Mother, if we ever put the Made-to-Order Stories in a book, we'll leave some blank pages at the end of this one. I bet you a nickel *some*body will know how it turned out."

With that he ran off with Carl. His back looked so cheerful over the taffy that his mother thought he had forgotten all about the story. But he hadn't.

A Story About Ancestors

Jimmy came to the door of the living-room and stopped short, looking very cross to see that his mother had a caller. He didn't look so cross as his mother felt, for the caller was an old gentleman whom she had never seen before, who said he was a distant cousin, and who wanted to find out all about their great-grandfathers. He seemed to think they were very important, but Jimmy's mother didn't, and she was wishing very much he would go away and ask somebody else. Jimmy wished so too, from the expression of his face.

Then he went away and his mother heard the typewriter in her study tapping slowly. When he came back, he went into the room, endured being introduced to the old gentleman and did not squirm too visibly

when the caller said that the shape of his head was like one of his great-uncles'. He had a piece of paper in his hand, and as soon as he could, he laid it on his mother's lap and looked at her hopefully. On it he had written:

Dear mother
Will you tell me a made to order story.
About a ironing-bord , a big grandfather clock,
a bag of popcorn , a bottle of ink,
a yellow and black and red stone.

GOOD BY MOTHER

from Jimmy

His mother read it and raised her eyebrows. Jimmy looked at the old gentleman and sighed. It was plain he wished he could do something more than sigh. So did his mother.

"A fine little chap," said the old gentleman.

Jimmy shuddered and went away.

But not far. For at the very instant when the old gentleman was saying good-by at the door, Jimmy's mother felt herself clutched from behind.

"Now!" said Jimmy. "Let's beat it."

So they did, off into the pine woods where they couldn't be seen by any more callers.

But still they couldn't seem to get rid of the old gentleman's ideas. Perhaps they had slipped into the story when Jimmy had laid the paper on his mother's lap.

"It's funny," she said, "and you may not like it very well, but this very story is about your great-grandfather and your grandfather."

Jimmy looked alarmed.

"But there's a skunk in it," said his mother.

"Oh, that's all right then!" said Jimmy. "Go ahead."

It began rather a long time ago [said his mother], maybe forty-five years ago, when my grandfather (that's your great-grandfather) was asked to make an address before a big meeting of teachers down in Massachusetts. He was a very careful man, who believed in getting everything ready beforehand, and he started in at once, to make ready for this. He had his best suit cleaned, bought himself a fresh necktie,

wrote his speech all out, then copied it, and more than a week before the day, he spoke to the livery-stable man about driving him to the train. For there weren't many trains a day, forty-five years ago, and to get to his meeting on time, he'd have to be driven fifteen miles to a junction where he could catch a train going south.

The September morning he was to start was lovely and sunny. He got a beautiful do-up on his necktie, and his coffee was just as he liked it. But right there his good luck stopped, for when he went into his study to get his clean-copied speech he saw something dreadful. He had left the sheets all spread around, so the ink would dry well, and to hold them down he had put on them a large oval paper-weight of onyx which somebody had brought him as a present from the Holy Land, the way they do to ministers.

Jimmy broke in. "What's onyx?" he asked.

"It's a shiny sort of stone, red and yellow and black, that's used for paper-weights," said his mother.

"Oh, yes!" said Jimmy. "Teacher has one on her

desk. I didn't know what its name was. What was the matter with this one?"

Matter enough [his mother answered, and then went on]. The cat had been playing with it, and had tipped it over against the ink-bottle, and knocked the ink-bottle to one side. And all night long the spilled ink had been soaking into the nice, clean, freshly copied pages of Grandfather's speech!

It was too late to do anything about it, for Patrick, the livery-stable man, had just driven up to the door. There wasn't even time to *say* anything about it, although Grandfather had plenty he *could* have said. He just ground his teeth together hard, crammed his hat on over his eyes, and snatched up the rough notes for his speech. They were rather scribbly, and written criss-cross of the paper, and he hadn't wanted to try to read them before an audience, but there wasn't anything else he could do now. It was lucky, in fact, that he had happened to put them on a shelf, and not on the table with his clean copy.

He felt a little better after an hour's driving, for two

reasons. For one, the livery-stable man was rather fresh from Ireland, and had a lovely brogue that tickled Grandfather to hear, and he called Grandfather "Your Reverence" just like somebody in a story.

And then he had turned out with his best outfit, the fast team of trotters, and his elegant new light wagon, the finest in town, with tan-colored velvet cushions and bright red wheels. Grandfather never cared anything about putting on style, but he always liked a good horse, and he did enjoy dusting along the road after those two sorrel spankers, heads up, tails flying, hoofs beating time together like a drummer rattling out a double-quick tattoo. Patrick was proud of them and every time they went through a village he'd brisk them up to their fastest trot. Then he and Grandfather would put their heads together and pretend to be talking, and not thinking a thing about their fast horses; although as a matter of fact, they were very much put out if people didn't turn their heads to look after them as they went spinning through. In between villages, where there wasn't anybody to see them, they often let the horses walk, and as they began to go

downhill into Ransom's ravine, Patrick put the brake on and looked ahead sharply. The road was very rough and stony there, and after dipping down steeply, led by a narrow bridge across a deep, black crack in the rocks, with a little mountain-stream rushing and shouting at the bottom. It was something like a cañon in your geography book, only not so deep. Plenty deep enough, though, for all drivers to want to keep their wits about them when they crossed the bridge. They were still a good way from it, when they made out something black and white, ahead of them, just going on to the bridge.

"That can't be a——" said Patrick, shading his eyes with his hand, for the bushes were thick on either side of the road just there, and the road in shadow.

"Yes, it is, too," said Grandfather, putting his hand out on the reins in a hurry. "Don't you go a step nearer till he gets out of the way."

Patrick was just as ready to stop as anybody. He hadn't been in America very long, but plenty long enough to learn a good deal about skunks.

"Aren't they bold?" said Grandfather, surprised to see one right in the middle of the road.

"There isn't a thing for *them* to fear," said Patrick bitterly.

"Lord! There's another, just coming out of the bushes," said Grandfather.

"Two more," said Patrick, standing up in the wagon, to see better.

"A family of them, Your Reverence," he went on, sitting down hard.

Sure enough, it was a mother-skunk with five young ones, half-grown, about as big as sizable kittens. And they were surely out for a good time. The mother lay down spang in the middle of the road in the soft dust, and spread out her legs comfortably, while the young ones began to play, frolicking up and down the bridge, and jumping at each other in and out of the bushes.

Grandfather looked at Patrick, and Patrick looked at Grandfather. Then Grandfather looked at his watch. "Is there any way around?" he asked.

"No, Your Reverence, not unless you go back ten miles to Bowley's cross-roads. This is the only bridge over the ravine between here and Pentonsville."

"You don't say so!" said Grandfather, rather put out with Patrick. They waited a minute or two.

Then Grandfather said: "Come, come, this will never do. Let's drive up nearer and throw stones at them."

"Never in this world!" said Patrick. "My wagon cost me seventy-five dollars and it's not a nickel it would be worth if we got the creature's bad feelings stirred up. In fact, we're a little too near right now, to please me."

"Well," said Grandfather, "I'll hold the horses. You go along on foot, and throw stones."

"Saving your presence," said Patrick, "I had a brother once threw a stone at a skunk. One is enough for one family."

"Nonsense!" said Grandfather. "It would be perfectly safe, from as far as you could throw a stone. Go along with you."

"You never smelled my poor brother," said Patrick, "but, if you like, I'll hold the horses and you can try it yourself."

Now Grandfather could throw a stone as far as the next man, and he really didn't believe that he would come to any harm. But all the same it would be pretty serious if he did. He had often smelled a skunk from half a mile away, and it scared him to think what it

might be, close to. Besides, it wouldn't have to be very bad, to be plenty bad enough to keep him from making his speech. He had a picture of himself standing up on the platform with ever so slight an odor of skunk floating out from him over the audience. And he knew it wouldn't do.

"No, we'll wait a while longer," he said to Patrick; "she can't stay there much longer."

But she did. The spot just suited her, so soft and quiet with plenty of hide-and-seek places for the children. You could see how she was enjoying it. She stretched out one leg, and then another, turned over, rolled, sat up and scratched, and then started in to wash herself from head to foot, just like a cat in front of the kitchen stove. Grandfather and Patrick gave a groan. And Patrick just gave up. It was plain he couldn't think of anything to do but sit there and wait. Grandfather didn't believe in giving up, ever. So he cast around in his mind, and hit on an idea.

"Maybe we can scare them away by yelling and shouting," he suggested.

"Maybe," said Patrick, looking uneasy. "But don't you yell a yell, Your Reverence, till I get my team

farther away. The very harness would be no good to me, if anything should happen."

He backed the horses up the road a little, and then said: "Well, we might try it, but not very loud, if you please, sir. It might not be to her taste."

"It wouldn't be any use unless it was loud," said Grandfather.

"It's not your wagon," said Patrick, getting angry.

"It's my best suit of clothes," said Grandfather, angry himself, "and you've promised to get me to the Junction in time for that train."

"Well, here goes," said Patrick, and he said in rather a loudish voice, "Get off wid ye! Whey! Whey!" the way you talk to a cow in the cabbages.

"Oh, you'll never get anywhere with that sort of business," said Grandfather crossly.

He stood up in the wagon, to get the good of his lungs, and drew a deep breath, and began to yell like an Indian, at the top of his voice. He was noted for the loudness of his voice, too. They used to come from all around to get him to address open-air meetings, because he could be heard so far. He was very cross indeed by this time and he let himself go, howling and

whooping and bellowing till he was black in the face. He noticed, after a while, that Patrick wasn't helping any, and glanced down to see why. There was Patrick, doubled over the arm of the seat, nearly dead with laughing.

Grandfather stopped yelling and looked at Patrick coldly. Patrick was ashamed of himself, but he couldn't stop.

"I can't help it, Your Reverence," he said, giggling and wiping his eyes. "It's like as if you were making a speech to the beasts, or preaching them a sermon, and they listening as pleased as any old woman in her pew."

As a matter of fact, the skunks hadn't objected at all to Grandfather's noise. The mother had turned her head toward him, and two of the young ones had stopped playing, but they showed no signs of thinking his hullabaloo disagreeable. Somebody told Grandfather afterwards that skunks are often quite deaf.

Grandfather was so angry with Patrick, and with the skunks and with himself by this time, that I'm sure I don't know what would have happened, if at that very minute, they hadn't seen far away, on the other side of the skunks, a pair of horses come into sight where the

road goes over the brow of the opposite hill. Behind the horses was a lumber wagon, with a canvas cover thrown over some bulky, lumpy-looking things. But the load couldn't have been heavy, for the horses came along at a good trot. They did, that is, till they came near enough to see the black-and-white animals playing around in the road. Then the driver stopped so short that the wagon almost shoved the horses off their feet from behind.

Patrick burst out laughing again, and this time Grandfather laughed with him. Not a good loud ha! ha! for he was still hot and angry, but a little grunt of a laugh he couldn't keep back. They saw the driver and a little boy in the seat of the lumber wagon peering down the road, shading their eyes with their hands.

"ARE THOSE SKUNKS?" shouted the man to Grandfather and Patrick. He was so far away that they could only just catch what he said, although he was evidently yelling as loud as he could.

"AND WHAT ELSE?" yelled Patrick back at him.

The man stared at the animals harder for a moment as if to be sure, and then yelled over, *"WHY DON'T YOU DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?"*

"Well, the nerve of him!" said Grandfather and Patrick, so mad at the man that they forgot to be mad at each other.

"DO IT YOURSELF!" shouted Patrick.

"DO WHAT?" asked the man.

"For goodness *sakes!*" said Grandfather, too exasperated to live. Then he raised his voice, *"THROW SOME STONES AT THEM!"* he shouted.

"I DASSENT," yelled back the man. *"GOT SOME VALLYBLE ANTIQUES IN HERE."*

"GET OUT ON FOOT AND THROW STONES!" shouted Patrick.

"NOT ON YOUR LIFE!" said the man.

"Some people are too selfish for this world," said Patrick to Grandfather.

He turned his back, as far as he could, on the skunks and the lumber wagon and the man and the boy and lighted his little short pipe. "We'll just be waiting," he said to Grandfather, "for there's nothing else to do."

So they waited. Grandfather held his watch in his hand, watching the second hand going around and around, faster and faster. The horses stamped and

"ARE THOSE SKUNKS?"

switched their tails against the flies, and tossed their heads, till Patrick got out and undid the checkreins. Over in the lumber wagon Grandfather could see the little boy talking and talking to the man, and he wondered what the child could find to say that took so long. By and by, he saw the boy get out of the wagon and disappear in the bushes. And a few minutes later to their great astonishment, he came out of the woods beside the road where Grandfather and Patrick sat waiting.

"How'd you get here?" they asked, all excited. "Is there another bridge over the ravine?"

"No, but there's a narrow place where the rocks come pretty close together, and a tree's fallen across," he told them. "I had an idea, and it was too long to yell at you, so I came around to tell you."

"Well, what's your idea?" asked Grandfather, not thinking it would amount to anything.

The little boy began: "Old Judge Pellsew is going to move out West to live with his married daughter, and before he left he asked my father to take some of his old family relics up to his niece's house, in Arlington,

and that's where we are going. It's mostly an old grandfather clock and two chairs."

"Well," said Grandfather, very short, "I don't see what that's got to do with me. I've got to get to the Junction in time for the eleven-forty-five train south."

"We live at the Junction," said the little boy, "so how would this do? We'll carry the things out into the woods, up the ravine, where I crossed, and you come there to help us get them across, and load them in your wagon. Then your team can turn around and carry the antiques back to Arlington, and we'll turn around and carry you back to the Junction."

"I don't see myself," said Grandfather, who must have been sixty years old then, "carrying one end of a grandfather clock along a fallen tree over a thirty-foot drop."

"Oh, that'll be all right," said the little boy. "One of the things we have is an ironing-board, an extra long one, and we can lay that down for a bridge. Then the last fellow across can pull it over and take it along."

"It might be worth trying," said Grandfather doubtfully.

The little boy put his hands up to his mouth and

yelled to his father, "'SALL RIGHT!" and they saw the man get out of the wagon at once and begin to unload things from the back.

Patrick tied his horses and they hurried off into the woods after the little boy, for they hadn't a minute to lose. The man was already there with the two chairs and the ironing-board. He laid it down across the ravine, and it was *just* long enough. The little boy had to steady it with his foot as Patrick ran across it, and grabbed the two chairs. Then the man rushed back to his wagon, and brought the clock along, Grandfather helping carry it across the board.

They got it into Patrick's wagon, and set it up in the front

seat, tying it in with the hitch-ropes. Then they all tore back to the narrow place, and skipped across the ironing-board, all but Patrick who stooped to pick it up. But it was heavier than he thought, and slipped right out of his hands, and went falling down and down into the ravine. Patrick looked scared, but the man called to him: "Never mind! 'Twa'n't one of the antiques!" And then as Patrick nodded, relieved, he added, still shouting over his shoulder as he ran, "The things're to go to Mrs. Pettingill's, on the West Road."

"I have a brother living on the next farm to them," Patrick shouted back. "They'll get there all right."

Grandfather and the man and the little boy piled into the empty lumber-wagon, the horses were turned around double-quick and off they started, lickety-split. Grandfather knew they never could make it. But the man wanted to show that Patrick wasn't the only person to have fast horses, and he kept his on the run for most of the four miles to the Junction.

At that they'd have missed the train, if it hadn't been a little late. They saw it pulling into the station, as they came around the turn into the village street,

and the man let out a yell at his horses. Down the slope they came, slam-banging along, Grandfather holding to his hat with one hand and to the side of the seat with the other. The conductor of the train thought it was a runaway, and stopped to see what would happen. And that was what saved Grandfather. They slewed up in front of the station, the horses lathering white, the wagon swinging over on two wheels, and Grandfather fell out, shouting: "Hold on! Hold on! Just a minute!" I tell you he could hardly believe it, when he actually found himself sitting in the train, taking out his pocketbook just like any other passenger, to pay for his ticket.

"He must have been feeling just about all right!" commented Jimmy, rolling over from where he lay on the pine needles.

His mother looked at him hard and shook her head. Jimmy sat up quickly.

"Great Scott, Mother, it wasn't the *wrong train!*"

"No, there wasn't but one southbound train a day in those days. No, it was the right train all right.

But halfway there, he remembered that he had left the notes for his speech in Patrick's wagon, when he had made the change."

"For the land of——" Jimmy was horrified. "What did he *do?*"

"He didn't know what to do. And the closer he got to North Adams, the less he knew. He had been asked to tell them something about universities in England, and he had looked up lots of dates and history and statistics and things, and he couldn't possibly remember them out of his head. What's more, he was so shaken up that he couldn't seem to think even what was the main part of his speech! Actually, when he stood up on the platform, and faced his audience, he hadn't thought of a single word to say."

Jimmy looked miserably worried. He had forgotten the whole middle part of his recitation, the last time there was an entertainment at school. So he knew what it was like. He swallowed, in sympathy, "Well——"

Here is what he did. It came to him, as he looked around the crowd and saw how friendly they seemed.

He just started in at the beginning and told them all about what had happened: about the kitten that played with the ink-bottle, and his driving so far to get his train, and the skunks and his yelling at them, and what he said, and what Patrick said. He had intended it only as an explanation of why he hadn't his speech ready. But do you know, the audience seemed to think there was something funny about it! They got into such gales of laughing that he had to stop two or three times. And when he came to the last part, where he scrambled on the train, they all broke out applauding as if it were the end of a race.

By that time Grandfather had his nerve back again, and when he told them about leaving his notes, he went on: "So I haven't any speech at all, to make. But see here, maybe we can make one together. You must have wanted to know about English universities, or you wouldn't have asked me to talk about them. Suppose you ask me what it was you wanted to know, and I'll answer your questions."

And what do you think! It was the greatest success! Everybody was sort of stirred up about the skunks and wasn't afraid to ask questions. And what

they asked, reminded Grandfather of the things he had planned to say, and they had a lovely time. Grandfather used to say that he never spent a better hour with an audience.

"I suppose he could use his notes for another time, too," said Jimmy, lying down again.

"No, he never could find them. When he went back, he asked Patrick about them, of course, but they hadn't been seen. Patrick thought they'd fallen out on the way back. Grandfather put a notice in the newspaper and offered a reward, but nobody ever paid any attention to it."

Jimmy's mother tried to make this sound like the end, but Jimmy cornered her by asking, "Didn't anybody ever find them?"

"Well, yes," she said, "although that part doesn't really belong in here." And now she had to go on.

It was queer! Years went by, and Grandfather grew to be an old, old man, who didn't make speeches

any more. Then it was his son, my father, your grandfather, who made the lectures. And one autumn about twenty-five years after this, he was asked to speak for the Massachusetts teachers. There wasn't anything queer about this, for they meet every year and always have to have people lecture them. But while he was still wondering what to talk about, little Alta Brown came up on the front porch with some old yellow papers in her hand.

"Grandmother says to tell you she thinks these must belong to you," she said to Grandfather. "She had a clock-mender stop to tinker up our old grandfather clock yesterday, and he found these in under a sort of false bottom. Grandmother thought it looked like your handwriting."

And there were the notes, for Alta's grandmother was the Mrs. Pettingill to whom the old clock had gone. Somehow they'd been slipped into the clock, when it was put in Patrick's wagon. Maybe the man put them there to make sure they didn't blow out, and forgot to say anything about it. Grandfather never had thought of asking him. In fact he didn't know his name, and never saw him before or after that day.

Well, my father was a great joker, and he thought, just for fun, he would tell the audience down in North Adams the story of the speech and then read it to them, twenty-five years behind time. He thought perhaps it would amuse them. And it did. He happened to speak in the very same hall where Grandfather had been, and the second audience laughed just as hard over those skunks as the first one had. As he talked, an idea came to Father, and when he finished he said: "It is quite possible that, among the older people here today, there may be some one who was present twenty-five years ago. It would be very interesting if so."

Then he stopped, and everybody in the audience turned his head around to see if anybody stood up. Father had half expected to see one or two old, old men stand up. But nobody did. Twenty-five years is a long time, after all.

But right behind him on the platform, he now heard somebody laughing and, turning around, saw that it was the young mayor of the city, who was up there to give an address of welcome. He didn't look more than forty years old, and couldn't possibly have been a teacher twenty-five years before that. But he now

stood up and came forward to the front of the platform.

"I wasn't *here,* on that occasion," he said, while everybody held his breath to hear what he could possibly have to say. "But I was *there. I* was the little boy who had the idea of using the ironing-board as a bridge."

At this everybody began to laugh again, and some people clapped their hands. But he waved his arms to show them that he hadn't finished, and went on: "And now I'm going to tell you something which I have never divulged to a soul from that day to this. But before I do, I wish to express a hope that there are plenty of baseball fans in this audience, people who really appreciate the high importance of baseball."

Everybody stared. What in the world had baseball to do with that story?

"Our town team was going to play the last game of the season that day, and I was crazy to go. But my father was an old-fashioned farmer who thought that games were all foolishness. So when he said I had to go up to Arlington with him to help load and unload those darned old antiques, I didn't even dare ask to

stay to go to the baseball game. I felt pretty sore and mad about it, you can imagine, and more and more so, as our horses trotted along, faster and faster, carrying me farther and farther from the baseball field. Although I knew there wasn't the least hope, I kept on hoping, as children will, that *some*thing would happen: an earthquake, a flood, or one of the horses dropping dead with heart-failure. But although I knew all about them, and had often played with them when I was visiting the Penrose boys, I never once dreamed that that family of black-and-white cats on the Penrose farm could possibly be of any use in——"

But he never got any further. The very minute he said the word "cats," somebody in the audience snorted, and shouted out a great "Haw! haw!" and then like forty thousand bunches of firecrackers going off at once, everybody saw what had happened and burst out, just screaming with laughter. The more they laughed, the more they saw how funny it had been, and that made them laugh harder.

My father laughed the hardest of all. He used to say afterward that they had to laugh twenty-five

years' worth, all at once, to make up for the twenty-five years the joke had been kept dark.

Jimmy and his mother got up and strolled back through the orchard toward the house, Jimmy thinking over the story silently, as he likes to do, when there has been a good deal in it. Finally:

"You didn't say anything about the bag of popcorn," he said. "But I suppose he bought that and ate it on the train, going down."

"Yes," said his mother, "I suppose that was where the popcorn came in."

The Upside-Down Moral

All the crowd had been in swimming; and swimming in our swift, cold mountain river is no lazy-man's job. If you want to do any summer lazing around, you have to do it afterward. And that's what the little boys were doing, sprawled out on the meadow-grass, in the hot September sun, chewing away on some early apples. By the greatest good luck, an old red astrachan tree overhangs the path down to our swimming-hole.

"Say, Mother," murmured Jimmy through his apple, "how about a Made-to-Order Story?" He drew a long, luxurious breath and coiled himself over again into an even more comfortable heap. "But don't, for goodness' sakes, ask me what I want in it. I'm too comfortable to think. Just anything at all. Except, of course, a moral."

"How'd you like a story about a lot of people who thought they were doing something, and all the time they were doing something else?" asked his mother.

The little boys all turned their heads curiously.

"How *could* they?" asked Jimmy. "Sure, let's hear that one."

"It's really Aunt Stella's story, and it happened down in Pleasantville when Charlie was little, and Bob was a baby. They were all sitting at the lunch-table, after they'd finished lunch, one afternoon early in May, when they heard Nora (that was the new maid, just over from Ireland) come down the front stairs in great excitement."

Jimmy laughed. He thought he had caught his mother. "How could they *hear* that she was excited?" he asked, mockingly.

"Oh, easily! When she was quiet in her mind she only tripped two or three times on the way down. When she was excited, it sounded as though she'd fallen all the way from the top to the bottom." This satisfied Jimmy, and the story had a clear field.

This time it sounded—well, they all jumped up from the lunch-table, perfectly sure she had broken herself to pieces. But she hadn't. She was even right side up by the time they got there.

But she was excited. Her big, blue eyes were standing right out from her pretty Irish face and she could hardly talk, not even in the very broad brogue she always used. "The little bur-rd! The little yally bur-rd! Somebody lift the dure to his cage open and he's gone. And I ran to the windy and looked out and I see him in the apple tree by the gate."

Aunt Stella knew what she meant. They were always having a time about Charlie's canary-bird, Dick. Charlie never could remember to shut the door after he'd cleaned the cage, and Dick was always getting out and flying all over the house. But he had never flown outdoors before. Charlie looked anxious, and he and Nora ran as fast as they could to the front door and tore down the walk to the apple tree by the gate. Aunt Stella stopped to put Bob (he was still a baby) into his go-cart, for it was a lovely warm day and she knew it would do him good to get out.

But by the time she reached the apple tree, Charlie

wasn't there. She saw him legging it down the street toward the Albright house. Nora was jumping up and down flapping her apron and crying out that just as they got to the tree, they saw Dick fly out of the upper branches and go down toward Mrs. Albright's.

"I'll wheel the baby along after him," said Aunt Stella.

"Oh, please, ma'am, can't I come too?" asked Nora, "I'm so inter*est*ed in the little bur-rd, so far from his home. And it's such a grand day, and Aunt Bridgie always scolds anyhow, no matter what." (Aunt Stella's cook Bridget was Nora's aunt, you see, and she was trying to bring her up right. Perhaps that was why Nora was so homesick and blue.) Anyhow, Aunt Stella thought it might do Nora good to get away from being brought up for a while, and she said sure, she could go along, only she'd better take off her apron. It was rather crumpled because she'd been waving it around so to express her feelings. She said maybe she'd better take it along to wrap up the canary in, when they caught him, so they tucked it in back of the baby in the go-cart, and started after Charlie.

They found him talking to young Mrs. Albright.

She was doing up her lace curtains, and looking very cross and pale and tired. They heard Charlie say, "—a little canary bird, about as big as *that,* and when he chirped, he went *so.*" Charlie whistled.

"Oh, yes, Mother!" cried Dolly Albright. "Don't you remember, just a minute ago, a little bird came and sat on the porch railing and winked his eye at us."

"That's Dickie!" shouted Charlie. "He's got the smartest way of winking his eye."

"Was it a yellow bird?" asked Aunt Stella.

Mrs. Albright stopped pinning up her curtains, and began to look interested. "Yes, I remember now. And it flew up into the lilac bush."

"Yes, yes!" said Dolly, clapping her hands.

"And then it went round the corner toward the new tennis courts on Elm Street."

Charlie had already started as hard as he could clip it, toward Elm Street.

"Oh, please, Mother, mayn't I go along?" begged Dolly.

Mrs. Albright said at first: "Good gracious, no, child! You're not over your cold yet." But as she looked out and saw the sunshine so bright on the new

grass, and the lilacs all in blossom, she said: "Well, it *is* rather a nice day. I've been so busy I hadn't noticed. Oh, how good those lilacs smell!" She turned back to her little girl, "I tell you, Dolly, I'll go along with you to make sure you don't get your feet wet. We won't be gone long." She seemed to have forgotten all about her lace curtains, half on and half off the drying-frames. And neither Aunt Stella nor Nora said a word about them, you may be sure.

They hurried along after Charlie, down Elm Street, toward the new tennis courts. It was quite a walk and they almost caught up to Charlie before they were near enough to the courts to see that a big Negro man was dragging a roller around over them.

As they came in sight, he stopped working and leaned on the handle of his roller to stare at the crowd. For they were really almost quite a crowd by this time: Aunt Stella and Nora and the baby in his go-cart, and Mrs. Albright and Dolly and Charlie. That's a bigger crowd than usually goes around Pleasantville streets, at that hour of the afternoon, when most people are supposed to be busy tending to things at home—especially in house-cleaning time.

"Wheah you-all gwine?" called the negro, and then they saw that it was their nice old Rastus Carter, who was sort of handy-man for the town, beat all the rugs and carried out the ashes and swept off the snow and everything. Charlie called out to him: "We're after my little canary bird. *You* know him: Dickie. He got out of his cage, and flew down to Mrs. Albright's, and up in her lilac bush, and then around the corner this way. And his wings are so little and he *never* flies far, so he must be tired by this time, and he can't have gone much farther than——"

Rastus was already down on the walk with them, waving his arms and saying: "Yessuh, yessuh, I see him; sure's you bawn, I see him. Not more'n half an instanter ago, I see a little yaller bu'd flyin' along des as chipper as dough he had business to see to. He kep' a-goin' *'Queet! queet!'* des like dat."

"Oh, that was Dickie!" said Charlie and Nora and Dolly. "That's just the way he talks."

"Well'm," said Rastus, "I sure did see him, and he was goin' disaways. Come along and we'll fotch up wid him in a hurry."

They all went along with him, down the road. It

was rather a long way and the children had time to get big bunches of dandelions. It was too early for buttercups, so they tried with dandelions to see if the baby liked butter, but he only ducked his fat little chin down and giggled.

At the turn of the road, Rastus gave a start and cried out: "Dey he is! Dey he is! Right dere by dat patch of brambleberry bushes!"

"I see him! I see him!" the children said, and began to run. Mrs. Albright and Nora and Aunt Stella and the baby hurried along, too, as fast as they could, but when they caught up with them a little later, there was no Dickie to be seen.

"Where is he?" said Mrs. Albright, very much interested. A pretty pink had come up in her cheeks, from hurrying in the fresh air. "Where is he? And, oh, *did* you see that pear-tree in bloom? Wasn't it too lovely?"

For they were out in the country now, or almost, with a farmhouse near them and a field on the other side, where a farmer was plowing.

"He went *that* way," said Dolly.

"No, it was that way," said Charlie.

" 'Twasn't ary of them ways," said Rastus; "he went over todes that ho'se chestnut tree, and that's de way he went."

"Let's ask the farmer," said Mrs. Albright.

So they went through the bars into the field, and walked over to where the farmer was working. He stopped when he saw them coming and leaned on the handles of his plow. There were, you see . . . How many were there by that time? Rastus and Charlie, and Mrs. Albright and Nora and Aunt Stella and Dolly and the baby: seven people. It's not surprising that the farmer was rather surprised to see them come trailing across his field in the middle of the afternoon. Mrs. Albright explained what they were looking for, and told how much Charlie thought of his Dickie-bird, and how much they hoped they could find it, and how he surely couldn't fly very far because he was a house bird and had never been outdoors by himself before.

The farmer looked down at Charlie, "Say now, that's too bad!" he said. "I got a little boy about your

age. He ain't got any canary, but he's got a lame hen that he sets the greatest store by. I *bet* he'd feel bad if she ran away."

"Did you see my Dickie?" asked Charlie. "A little yellow bird about as big as *that,* and when he——"

"Oh, come to think of it, I don't know but what I did!" said the farmer, looking around. "Yes, sir, I remember now. I saw him flying along close to the ground. He went into the woods yonder."

Charlie looked pretty sober. "Oh, we'll never get him if he went into the woods," he said, with a tremble in his voice.

The farmer took up his lines and clucked to his horses. "Never you fear," he said. "He was flying slow, as though he was tired. We'll find him in one of the first trees, and it won't be any time now before twilight comes on, and he won't fly a fly after that. You just walk along while I plow this furrow. That'll bring me to the edge of the woods, and then I'll tie my horses and go in with you to help find your bird."

They walked along on the grass watching him. None of them had ever been so close to a real plow while it was plowing, and it was fun to watch the

bright sharp blade go ripping and shearing through the sod, turning up a big, brown ribbon of earth.

["I bet it smelled good," said Jimmy.]

Yes, that was just what Mrs. Albright said. She kept taking deep long sniffs to get the most of the smell she could. And every sniff she sniffed made her cheeks pinker. She said she thought it must be lovely to live in the country, and the farmer, not smiling a bit, said he'd always noticed that hens liked it fine.

His hens certainly liked it. They had come out, the minute they saw him plowing—you know the way hens do—just hot-footing it for the first place back of the plow, and as fast as one fat angleworm after another was turned up, how they did gobble them down. Dolly and Charlie got to laughing over their squawks and flutters and excitement, and so did the baby. Dolly had always just loathed angleworms before, and would have died before she'd touch one, but she got interested in one poor little scrawny pullet who never could run anywhere fast enough to get her share. Some big greedy hen, with her crop already bursting full, would pounce down on every worm and snatch it away from her. Finally Dolly was so sorry for the

pullet that she forgot all about hating to touch angleworms and caught hold of a big fat fellow, and held it out to the little pullet. And then another and another till the pullet's crop was all lop-sided too, like the bigger hens, by being so full of worms.

Nora had been looking around her, and smelling everything, and just then she saw a hawthorn tree in bloom, all white in the edge of the woods. The tears came to her eyes. "It's like home," she said; "it's like living. It's the happiest hour I've seen in the new country."

The farmer was now at the end of his furrow, at the edge of the woods. He tied his horses to an oak tree, and helped the ladies climb the fence. "I'll carry the baby, cart and all," he said; "I used to, when our little boy was a baby."

It was simply lovely in the woods, the first warm spring day. All the spring flowers were out, and the brook ran full over clean pebbles. Aunt Stella said she never saw anything lovelier. They felt like skipping and hopping, even the grown-ups.

"Now, let's see," said the farmer, "which way he'd be likely to go."

She caught hold of a big fat fellow, and held it out to the little pullet.

Just then Charlie pulled Aunt Stella's skirt and pointed to two men who sat in a corner of the fence, with a pack of greasy cards in front of them. They were such rough-looking tramps that Aunt Stella was very glad the farmer and Rastus were along. When the farmer saw the tramps, he asked them about Dick and began to describe him.

They did not look up from their cards. "No, we ain't see' a yellow bird, nor any other kind," one said crossly, and dealt out another hand.

The crowd went on and Rastus began to chuckle. "Dey ain' seen Dickie 'cause dey ain' look!" he said. "Dey said dey ain't seen him nor no other bu'd, and dat presact minute dere was a highhole buildin' his nes' in de tree dey had deir backs up against, and fo' meadow-larks wuz a-sittin' on de top fence rail, singin' fit to bust deyse'ves!"

And really the trouble in the woods was to pick Dickie out from among all the other birds who were flying and singing around. They hadn't had any idea that there were so many birds in the whole world as the farmer pointed out to them that afternoon. He knew them, every one, and told the children ever so

many things about how they built their nests and what color they were, and all, and whether they were good-natured or quarreled with their neighbors. He grew more and more observant himself, and was almost as pleased as the children when he showed them a little bunch of leaves, and after making them guess what it was, pointed out an opening on one side, and inside, four speckled eggs, as yellow as cream. It was an oven-bird's nest, he told them, the bird who called, "Teacher, *teacher, TEACHER!*" all the time. He said he guessed he'd have to bring his own little boy and show it to him.

"I declare," he said, "I ain't been out in the woods in springtime before in I don't know when! There's always such a lot of farm work to do then."

Finally they did catch sight of Dickie again; then they kept seeing him fly from one tree to another, very slowly, they said. It was plain he was tired. Poor Dickie, why shouldn't he be? It was the first time he'd done more than to fly across the room and back.

At last he settled in the tiptop of an ash tree that was ever so straight and tall. "Now," said the farmer, "I

tell you what. We couldn't catch him now if we should climb up there. But twilight is just beginning to fall and he won't fly any farther. I'll mark the tree so with my knife, and early, early tomorrow morning, just before daybreak (you know birds are so dead asleep then they can't move), I'll come out and get him, and bring him into town. Will that do?"

Aunt Stella said it would do very well, and that they ought to be getting home, for it must be late. Charlie and Dolly suddenly remembered that they were empty down to their toes—"just *starved.*"

The farmer looked at his watch and said it was five o'clock. Then he said: "Now, we've come clear through the woods to the other side and my house is just over that next field. You go along and have a drink of milk all around, and I'll get my horses and hitch up and take you to town. I've got to go, anyhow."

So he helped them over the fence, and went back for his horses while they walked along through a field that was actually, honestly red with wild strawberries. They kept stopping to pick them, and they ate and

they ate! And the strawberries were so good, and it took them so long that the farmer was at the house before they were.

There were a lot of cups of cool milk and a plate of cookies set out on a tray on the porch, and the farmer

called from the barn, where he was hitching up, that his wife had put them there to be eaten. They all sat down on the steps and drank the milk and ate the cookies, and agreed that never in all their lives had they tasted anything so good. Then they wet their handkerchiefs in the watering-trough and put them

around the big bouquets of wild flowers they had picked in the woods, and then the farmer came rattling out of the barn.

He had hitched up to a hay-wagon with a deep layer of straw, just the kind you read about, and he lifted them all in pellmell, laughing and squealing. All except the baby. They laid him down on Nora's apron, turned clean-side out (you see it was a good thing they had that along) in a nest of the straw; and he went very sound asleep that very minute, and never woke up all the way in.

It was a wonder, too, for they certainly made a lot of noise. A straw-ride, they found out, is just as much fun as people say it is. The children sang some songs they'd learned at school, and then Rastus began. They none of them ever dreamed he had such a lovely voice. Every year after that they had him sing at their school entertainments. He sang one lovely old negro song after another, some funny and some sad, and they applauded after each one as though they were at a concert. It was *like* a concert, he sang so well.

When they got back to the tennis court, he climbed down and went to rolling again. "I hope you get yo'

bu'd all right," he called. "I'm much obliged fo' takin' me 'long!"

At the Albrights' they dropped Dolly and her mother. "I've had a lovely time!" said Mrs. Albright, holding up the big bunch of white violets. "Do let me know about it when you get Dickie back."

When the hay-wagon drove up to Aunt Stella's house, they all began to shout at the tops of their voices to make Bridget (Nora's aunt and their cook) come out and see them. They were dying to surprise her! She was a very good cook, and nice when the children were sick, but she was a cross old thing who never would be the least bit interested or pleased in anything, nor show that everything wasn't just the way she expected it to be. You know there's nothing more disagreeable than somebody who won't be surprised. They thought this time they surely would give her a turn, driving up that way in a hay-wagon, with their hands full of wild flowers and Charlie's cap running over with wild strawberries he'd picked for his father's supper; but Bridget hardly looked at them when she came out—only at the strawberries, and then she sniffed.

"That'll be all you get for your supper," she said, "running away to pleasure yourselves in the woods, and laving me to half break my neck over that squawking little Dickie bird!"

Remember there were now in the hay-wagon, Charlie and Nora and the farmer and Aunt Stella—the baby was still asleep, and he couldn't talk, anyhow. Well, as true as true, it sounded as though just one person with a monstrous big voice shouted out, "DICK!!!" they all said it together so.

"Yes, Dick!" snapped Bridget crossly. "Just after you all went out I heard him squallin'. Charlie had lift the dure to th' cage open again and th' little fool bird had flew out and got his feet tangled up in the net curtains. I had to climb on a stepladder to git him down—me at my age—and the rheumatism in me knees!"

It was so still when she stopped talking, you could hear the little chink of the bits in the horses' mouths. Nobody said a word until Aunt Stella asked Nora, in a very queer-sounding voice, "But, Nora, I thought you looked out of the window and saw him fly into the crab-apple tree?"

And Nora said (her voice was very queer-sounding, too), "Sure, now I mind me, the windy was shut."

Something went off on the front seat, like an explosion. It was the farmer exploding in a monstrous great laugh. And then Aunt Stella laughed. And Charlie laughed. And after a minute, by the time she really took it in, Nora threw back her head, and her laugh was the jolliest and heartiest of all. They hadn't heard her laugh like that since she had landed in America.

Well, they laughed and they laughed, and every time they started to stop, somebody would have it come over him all fresh and start again and that would start them all off. Bridget got crosser and crosser because they couldn't get their breaths enough to tell her what the joke was, and nothing makes anybody crosser than to have people laughing over a joke he doesn't know. They kept right on laughing as they unloaded themselves out of the farm wagon, and thanked the farmer and said good-by. And as far away as they could see him down the street, he was still doubling over, and whacking his knee with one hand and holding his sides, and haw-haw-hawing till people

came to their windows. They had to smile to see him, though they hadn't any idea what was the matter with him.

Then Aunt Stella and Charlie and Nora and the baby went into the house and had supper. Bridget had a beautiful supper ready. She always did, for all her talk. And they put the baby to bed, and that was all there was to that story, except that for days, every time they looked at the canary, they burst out laughing.

"I should think *everybody* would have laughed at them!" said Jimmy. "Anybody so foolish they didn't know what they were up to, any more than that. They certainly didn't have good sense that day."

"The two tramps and Bridget had all their good sense," said his mother, with a certain accent and intonation.

Jimmy looked at her quickly, with the suspicious look he has, when he thinks somebody is trying to put a moral over on him.

His mother looked back at him hard, with one corner of her mouth a little tucked in.

In a moment Jimmy got the idea and began to laugh delightedly. "I get you! I get you!" he shouted. "Say, kids!" he cried to the other boys. "It's the *opposite* of a moral! Gee! That's great!"

The Father's Story

"Sure, I'll tell you a story," said Father. "Keep away from that grease-gun or I'll catch it when Mother sees your clothes. Climb up on the front seat while I squirt some transmission dope into the differential casing. Sure, I'll tell you a lalapalooza of a story, all about a wild bull and a hunk of chewing-gum and a tub of lard and a hot-water bottle and a barrel of lime-sulphur solution—and a lot of other things." With no more if's or and's the story was under way.

Well, once upon a time, Little Happy-Go-Lucky Henery lived in a corner of the Grand Ducal garage of Latavia. This was in the bad old days before the

war when Dukes and Barons and Marquises were thick all over Europe, and the Grand Ducal garage housed a very fast bunch. There was Baron Stutz, the Honorable Percy Arrow, and Sir Rollo Royce, and Madame la Comtesse de Launay Belleville, and Mr. Marmaduke Marmon, all hand-built, all beautiful with shiny varnish.

But Happy-Go-Lucky Henery was none of that bunch. Henery was a waif. No one knew his last name. Years before, he had been found abandoned by the wayside. It looked as if his driver had tried to cut down an oak tree with his front axle, but the tree had had the best of it. It was Faithful Peter, the gardener's helper, who had found Henery and had straightened out his wishbone and bought a new radiator for him, and pulled off his crumpled tin and built a light delivery body for him. And Henery was grateful and now carried Peter wherever he wanted to go—almost always.

Well, this morning Peter called his little son Peterkin. "Come on," he said. "The Head Gardener has given me a day off. Let's go for a ride and see Grand-

mother and take her the hot-water bottle the second lady's maid gave us."

The hot-water bottle had leaked and the lady the second lady's maid was maid to was going to throw it away, but Peter had mended it with tire patches and it was just the thing for shivery old Grandmother. So they climbed up on the seat, Faithful Peter and little Peterkin, and Peter put his foot on the starter and—nothing happened.

"Oh, yes!" said Peter. "The battery *has* been running down. But never mind, Happy will start on magneto. Hop out, Peterkin, and spin the crank."

So Peterkin hopped out and tried to spin the crank but he could only give it a quarter turn, and that was no go. So Peter got out too and spun the crank around and around; but nothing happened. By and by Peter got tired of that.

"It's cold," he said. "But we'll fix it. We'll push it out to the first hill."

Luckily, the hill began right outside the garage. They pushed Happy Henery out and as soon as he

started rolling down the hill they jumped in and Peter put the lever forward, and Henery's insides groaned and grunted and wheezed for a minute as the wheels turned the motor over and then he began to run beautifully *on All Four*. Peter hadn't been able to get him to hit on more than three for a week. He was proud as could be, as he smoked his long curved pipe and smiled at the friends he passed.

Meanwhile, Happy too was having a good time. He liked to roll, for he was a gypsy at heart. He hated to stand in the little corner of the garage where they let Peter keep him, and listen to the hand-made cars bragging about their pedigrees. As he rolled by the Ducal palace he saw Sir Rollo Royce, his plate glass all burnished and his mud-guards manicured, waiting under the porte-cochère.

"How dull a life the gentry lead!" he thought. "Poor old Rollo will have to cool his tires there for an hour or more till the Duke gets through with the council, and then he'll only have a half-mile run at seven miles an hour to the Parliament House, and that's all they'll let him do today. Isn't it great to be poor and free!"

With that he speeded up his pistons and fairly raced away along Latavia's broad highway till, almost before they knew it, they came to the little village where Grandmother lived. You can just imagine how glad Grandmother was to see them. She kissed Faithful Peter on both cheeks and gave little Peterkin a cake with caraway seeds on it, and she gave Happy Henery a big drink of water from out of her well; and that was a good thing, because he had run so fast he had just about boiled his radiator dry.

Then Peter and Peterkin and Grandmother had luncheon. They had roast pork, biscuits, and straw-

berry shortcake. And they told her all the city news, and she told them all the village news, and the afternoon went happily along till suddenly the church clock struck three. Then Peter jumped up.

"Good-by, Granny dear," he said. "There is a lawn fête at the Castle tonight, and I must be back by six o'clock to hang out the Japanese lanterns."

Granny kissed them both—grannies are great on kissing—and she gave them a great big tub of lard she'd made when she killed the pig last winter. Happy was fortunately still quite warm, so Peterkin cranked him with a quarter turn, while Granny held up her old hands in admiration. They were so proud that they quite forgot to give her the hot-water bottle; but that was just as well, as you shall hear.

They hadn't rolled more than a mile back along the highway before they were stopped by a gorgeous Grand Ducal traffic cop. He held out his gold-headed night-stick.

"Stop!" he cried. "Whatter ye doin' rattling along the highway? Don't you know there's a speed test this afternoon between Baron Stutz and Mr. Marmaduke

Marmon for the championship of Latavia? The highway's closed."

"Oh, very well," said Faithful Peter. "I like to drive on the back roads very well indeed." So he turned Happy onto a little bumpy side road that ran through the immense forest of oaks and beeches and plane trees that the geography books tell you is one of the chief natural resources of Latavia. They ran bumpety-whang-bang over the rough places, and rattledy-rattledy over the smooth places—there was no denying that the mudguards were a little loose—and Faithful Peter had to listen hard to make out the sound of the motor from all the other noises. But he was used to it and he nodded his head.

"Happy is still hitting on four," he said. "This is one of the best trips we ever took."

All of a sudden they turned a corner round a big wild-cherry tree, and there in the road stood an old man with a white beard holding out his arms. He was very tall and his arms reached clear across the road—almost. Faithful Peter stepped on the brake so hard that Happy sputtered and stalled; but he didn't skid because the ruts were too deep to get out of.

"What's this?" said Peter. "Is this road closed too?"

"Not that I know of," said the stranger. "I heard you coming. I've heard you coming a long time. I just wanted to ask you for a lift."

"With all my heart," said Peter. "Get up here beside me. Peterkin can sit on the lard tub behind."

"You seem to have plenty of room," said the stranger. "Couldn't you take my spraying outfit, too? You see I am Professor Wiseoldbirdsky, President of the Grand Ducal Academy of Science. I am making some interesting experiments on wild cherries. But I have just remembered that I am invited to a lawn fête at the Castle this evening, and I shall certainly be late if I walk, pushing my spray cart before me."

"A thousand apologies, Your Excellency," said Peter, getting out and lifting the spray outfit onto Happy's box body. "I should have recognized you at once, for I too am connected with court circles, but when you held your arms out and I saw your bright scarlet coat I thought you must be some new sort of traffic cop."

The Professor laughed. "Oh, as for the scarlet

coat, I wear it because it is hunting season in the forest, you know, and the hunters are never very careful what they shoot at. I am willing to make great sacrifices to science, but I do not wish to be mistaken for a roebuck and shot. I do not think even after luncheon the most careless hunter could mistake my scarlet coat for a deerskin."

"I am not so sure of that," said Peter as he spun the crank. "They are terribly careless, those hunters!"

"I see you are an intelligent man," said the Professor. "No doubt you would be interested in hearing my theory about spraying the wild cherries. Cherries, as you know, are one of the chief resources of Latavia. Unfortunately they have certain fungus pests which can be——"

"A thousand pardons," broke in Peter; "but couldn't you explain that while we are running? It is still many a long mile to the Castle, and the sun, where I can see it through the trees, is very low. I fear we may be late for the lawn fête."

So they rolled on, and the Professor explained to Faithful Peter that if all the wild cherry trees in the forest were thoroughly sprayed with lime-sulphur

solution, then all the fungus pests would be killed and no one would have to spray the tame cherry trees any more. "A long job, but an interesting one," he remarked, "and in the end it will save many thousands of crowns to the fruit growers of Latavia. I have dedicated my life to it."

Meanwhile little Peterkin sat on the lard tub and studied the Professor's spray-machine. It was a barrel on wheels. There was a pump on top of it, and when you moved the handle of the pump (Peterkin moved it very gently, for he was fond of machines) it squirted a white sort of liquid out through a long hose. This was fun and Peterkin soon found how to put the end of the hose back in the bunghole. Then he could pump as hard as he wanted to, pumping the liquid through the hose and back into the barrel again, and never spill a drop.

All at once, as they crossed a leafy glade, they heard shouts. "The hunters!" cried the Professor, standing up and showing his red coat. But it did no good, for the hunters hadn't killed a deer that day and they had drunk so much cherry bounce (which is another of the

chief products of Latavia) that they didn't see anything very distinctly.

"A buck!" they cried. "Hey, Yoicks, Tantivy!" and they all put their guns to their shoulders and fired a volley.

Faithful Peter pulled the throttle open so suddenly that the Professor sat down bang. The bullets whistled on all sides. But they were not very well aimed, and Happy ran so fast that the hunters were soon left behind.

"Well!" said Peter. "That was a close one. A few bullets went through the hood, but there's no harm done, I guess."

But hardly had he spoken when he noticed that Happy was slowing down. Peter pulled the throttle wider, but that did no good. Happy ran slower and slower, and worse than that, his insides began to grind and groan. Peter put the lever into neutral and listened.

"There's something wrong," he said, turning off the switch. "Hop down, Peterkin, and try the petcocks."

So Peterkin got down and lay on his back on the

dead leaves, and opened the top petcock—and no oil ran out. Then he opened the bottom petcock—and no oil ran out.

"This is serious," said Faithful Peter. "Happy can do without a lot of things, but he can't run to the Castle without oil. However can we get to the lawn fête by six o'clock?"

Now Faithful Peter wasn't the sort of driver who knows how to steer and step on the gas, and that's all he knows. He could make a tow rope out of a wild grapevine or a blowout patch out of a piece of tin can; he was a really resourceful trouble-shooter. He had to be, or he couldn't have driven Happy Henery. He was so resourceful that if he had been of pure Nordic stock I should certainly have considered him a most intelligent mechanic; but as he was at best a round-headed Alpine, and perhaps even a Mongoloid type, I shall have to put his success down to the low cunning of the savage. But he couldn't make Happy run without lubrication. Ah, but he did almost the same thing. All at once he sprang into the box body, ripped the cover off the lard tub and began cramming lard by handfuls down Happy's breather-pipe.

"Excellent!" cried the Professor. "Lard oil is an excellent lubricant. It solidifies at rather a low temperature but I should judge the motor is hot enough to keep it fluid."

"I'll say it's hot enough," said Faithful Peter, the man of few words.

"Oh, Father!" cried little Peterkin who had closed the petcocks, but was still lying on his back on the dry leaves. "Oh, Father, it's beginning to run out of the new hole!"

"What new hole?" Sure enough, when he looked he found a brand-new hole where one of the bullets had nicked a piece out of the crank-case. "It's no good!" he cried in despair. "We shall never get to the lawn fête!"

"Would chewing-gum help?" cried little Peterkin. He pulled a wad out of his mouth and popped it over the hole. Hurray, it stuck! Then they put lard down the breather-pipe till it would hold no more, and again they rolled forward over the leaf-strewn road.

It was getting later and later now, and faithful Peter drove faster and faster. He swung around corners, and he dodged in between boulders. It all

went beautifully till he came to a tree across the road. Happy cleared it at a bound, but he couldn't make a sharp turn beyond. His front wheels side-slipped and he went bang into a prickly thorn-tree, and there they were with the radiator smashed to bits and all the water running out!

This time it was the Professor who put his highly trained scientific mind to work, and thought the problem out. "The function of the cooling system," he said, "is to keep the motor from getting too hot."

"Marvelous!" said Faithful Peter. "What a thing is science!"

"The radiator," continued the Professor, "is merely a part of the system. Stationary engines use a tank instead. Now here we have a tank." He pointed to the spray outfit. "Let us connect it with the water jacket. To be sure, the lime will leave a precipitate and the sulphur will smell more or less, but we cannot be choosers."

No sooner said than done. They cut the spray hose in two, hitched one end of it to the motor's intake hose-connection, hitched the other to the motor's outlet hose-connection, and put the loose end back through

the bunghole into the tank. "Now agitate the pump handle," said the Professor, and little Peterkin pumped for dear life. And again they sped on, every minute getting nearer the lawn fête. Everything would have been lovely if Henery hadn't developed a fit of coughing. Faithful Peter was once more in despair. "Heaven send it isn't carburetor trouble," he groaned. "I hate to tinker with carburetors, they're so temperamental! But maybe it's only water in the sediment bulb. I'll drain it." Then he got down and lay with his back among the dead leaves; but he couldn't turn the petcock, and when he got a wrench on it and twisted hard, the tank was so old and rusty that the whole sediment bulb came off.

"Hi there!" cried Faithful Peter. "The gas is all running away. Give me something to catch it in."

"Give him the hot-water bottle we forgot to give Granny," cried Peterkin, who couldn't leave his pumping. So the Professor handed the hot-water bottle to Peter, and Peter caught it bulging full of gas. "It's enough to get us home," he said, scrambling up, "if we could only get it hitched to the carburetor somehow. I wonder——"

Then he took the hot-water bottle. It was a rubber hot-water bottle and had a loop to hang it up by. He tied this loop with a string to the wind-shield brace. Then he loosened the feed-pipe from the broken sediment bulb; it was a brass pipe and bent easily. So he bent it up and ran it through a crack in the floor boards, and made a tiny hole with his knife in the hot-water bottle, and stuck the end of the pipe into it, and the gas began to trickle down through the tube into the carburetor, and Happy ran again without coughing. "It seems to work," said Faithful Peter, "and we'll get home if we don't have any more trouble."

But they did! Perhaps lard oil is really not a first-class motor lubricant, or perhaps they used too much of it. Anyway, instead of going chug, chug, chug, chug, Happy began going chug —— chug, chug; and then he began going chug —— —— chug. Then he went chug —— —— ——, and then he didn't go at all.

"It's no use," said Faithful Peter, "I'll have to clean the spark plugs." But first he let out about a couple of quarts of melted lard out of the crank case. Then he cleaned the spark plugs. He found them very, very

dirty. And when he had them cleaned they didn't look just right to him. "I think the points are too close," he said. So he took his knife and bent the points farther apart. "There, that's about twenty-five thousandths of an inch, I guess," he said as he screwed them back in again.

But he had set them too far apart and when Peterkin gave the crank a quarter turn the electricity hadn't pep enough to jump from one point to the other. Even when Faithful Peter spun the crank round and round, it hadn't pep enough. And there they were. They tried to push Happy, but the road was sandy, and they gave that up.

"Well," said the Professor, "I have no suggestions to offer. Do you get it working, while I step back around that last turn. I fancy I saw a wild cherry tree there in a very bad state of infection." So he went off while Peter put his head in his hands and thought. He guessed it might be that he had made the spark gap too wide, but he hated to admit that he was wrong. Every once in a while he would stop thinking and get up and spin the crank around till you could hear the triple gears singing and the valve tappets going click,

click, click, but even at that he couldn't spin the magneto fast enough to get the electricity to jump the big wide gap.

Then all at once they heard a cry of Help, Help! and there around the corner came the Professor running for dear life, and after him came one of the long-horned wild bulls that are another of the riches of Latavia. It was a mighty close race, for wild bulls hate scarlet cloaks, and the Professor's cloak was the reddest scarlet you ever saw. Well, the Professor just made it. He took a flying leap into the box body, and the bull hit Happy Henery where the spare tire ought to be. Bang, whang! he hit him, and pushed Happy Henery right out of the sand and along the road beyond at about twenty-seven miles an hour. Faithful Peter had the presence of mind to jump in, and little Peterkin had never left the pump, so they were all right. It was only a question if the bull would push them all the way to the Castle. The Professor took off his cloak and dangled it just in front of the bull's eyes, and the bull speeded up to thirty-one miles per hour, but he was *so* mad at the cloak that he began to swing his head and try to hook it with his horns.

He took a flying leap into the box body.

That would never do. Then Peter had a bright, bright thought. He pushed the lever into high, and the bull was going so fast that the magneto spun round at such a clip that the electricity had all sorts of pep, and it did jump the spark gap, and off went Happy's motor whirrrrrrrrrr. Even at that they couldn't get away from the fierce wild bull till the Professor thought of dropping the cloak. The last they saw of the bull he was pawing it and tossing it with his horns till little scraps of red cloth were littered all about as thick as the dead leaves.

"Ah, well," said the Professor, "I think I may as well stay out of the forest till hunting season is over, so I won't need it again."

After that they had no more trouble except tire trouble, and that was nothing unusual. They didn't stop when a front tire went down, it was getting so late, but ran along on it flat. By and by the tire came off and rolled away far into the forest. Then they ran on the rim. By and by the rim got loose and finally that came off. Now they *were* up against it. They couldn't run on the spokes, and they still had five miles to go to the Castle. Peter put Henery into neutral but

he left the motor running, for he knew he could never get it started again if he let it stop. And then they thought of the empty lard tub. They tried it and it fitted beautifully over the spokes. They tied it to the spokes with fence wire, for they were out of the forest now out among the fields.

It might not have worked on a rear wheel but it did fine in front. A little bumpy but they didn't mind. On they ran to the Academy of Science, where the Professor unloaded the spray pump, and then quick, before Henery got too heated without his cooling system, up the hill to the Grand Ducal garage. The gas in the hot-water bottle held out to the very top of the hill, though there was hardly a drop left in it when Henery pounded into his usual corner—the lard tub had pounded pretty well out of round, running over the cobbles.

Faithful Peter hurried off to hang out the lanterns for the lawn fête (it was just ten minutes to six) and little Peterkin took an inner-tube patch and mended the hole in the hot-water bottle. After that he wrapped it up and sent it to his grandmother by parcel

post. The post office was still open because it was on standard time.

That night when Baron Stutz was bragging about how many seconds he'd clipped off the road record, and Sir Rollo Royce was telling how he'd been insulted by being offered petrol (he always called gas, petrol) right from the pump—and they never even offered to strain the bally stuff through shammy, by Gad!—and the Hon. Percy Arrow was being massaged by his chauffeur, they heard a little gurgling noise coming from Happy's corner.

"Listen to the little vagabond still boiling," said La Marquise de Launay Belleville. "He must be wild with carbon. Disgusting, I call it!"

But Happy wasn't boiling! He couldn't boil. He hadn't any cooling system left. He was chuckling as he thought over what a glorious day he'd had, and what glorious days he was going to have. For a car like Happy-Go-Lucky Henery doesn't die; you can always fix it up again.

"Well, it all might have happened," said the Little

Boy, "but I dunno. Do you really think it's a true story?"

"I surely do," said Father. "I know it must be true because it was told to me on the road from Soissons to Laon by a sergeant motor-mechanic, and before the war he'd been a garage hand in Kenosha, and all garage hands are notoriously truthful."

Jombatiste and the Forty Devils

Jimmy came in laughing and looking mischievous. "Mother, do you remember the time you made me have a Made-to-Order Story without any little boy in it, at all?"

Yes, she remembered that. It had turned out to be the story of the coal-scuttle.

"Well, to make up for that, I want my today's story about just lots and lots of little boys. Nothing but."

"Oh, goody!" said his mother. "That'll be fine. It's always more fun when there's a gang."

"Yes, that's what I thought," said Jimmy.

His mother turned things over in her mind for a moment, and found what she wanted. "This must be the story about how Jombatiste Laflamme saw the forty devils," she said.

Jimmy stared. "I don't see what that has to do with boys."

"All the samey, there's hardly anything else in it *but* boys," she told him. "It's the boyest story you ever heard. Just boy goings-on from start to finish. It's all about what happened one day to some boys who used to live, ever so long ago, up on a back road, in a settlement that was called Partridgeville, not because there were so many partridges around (although there were) but because nearly all the people in it were named Partridge. It had been settled by four brothers, Joshua, Zerubbabel, Jeremiah, and Noah Partridge; and they'd had lots of children and grandchildren, so that there was hardly a house up there that wasn't lived in by some Partridge or other. They were great folks to stick to their old ways, and they kept the same Christian names they'd always had, so that there must have been six or seven Zerubbabels, and as many Jeremiahs and Joshuas and Noahs. If you were to stop your horse on the grassy common that was the center of the little settlement and call out, 'Oh, Joshua!' you'd have a regular procession coming out to see what you wanted, from an old great-grand-

father with two canes, down to a couple of four-year-old boys."

"I don't see how they ever told each other apart, themselves," said Jimmy. "And what *did* the teacher of their school do?"

"Oh, they had invented a perfectly good way to manage. Every one of them had something tacked on to his name that told who he really was. Take the Zerubbabels, for instance. There was Old Zeb and Young Zeb (he was sixty years old, by the way) and little Zeb and Jerry's Zeb and Zeb-in-the-lane and finally Zeb's Zeb. It was perfectly handy, once you caught on to the idea.

"They had the best sort of times together, especially the children; for there were plenty of them, all ages, to play with each other. Until they were twelve, they had their Saturdays free to do whatever they liked—of course after they had done their chores."

"What did they have for chores?" asked Jimmy, with interest.

"The usual things boys had, long ago: taking the cows out to pasture, and turning the churn, and splitting kindlings, and feeding the hens, and running

errands and keeping their shoes blacked. But if they stepped around they could get them done early Saturday morning and have all the rest of the day. And you'd better believe they didn't need anybody to tell them how to have a good time." And now the story really began.

This day I'm telling you about was the first Saturday after school began in the fall, a lovely, warm, sunny day, with the first red leaves showing on the sumacs. It was really too early for chestnutting, but they pretended they could get some, maybe, and asked their mothers to put up some lunch so they could stay out all day. There were seven of them, all about the same ages, from nine to twelve, and these were their names: Little Noah, Zeb's Zeb, Noah-on-the-Hill, Jerry's Josh, Josh's Jerry, Four-toed Noah (yes, he was born with only four toes on one foot—wasn't it queer?), and Young Josh.

Young Josh had the hardest time getting his lunch put up, for his mother had died when he was a baby, and it was his older sister who kept the house. She

was all right, a nice, good-natured, pretty, nineteen-year-old girl, a splendid cook, and very good to her little brother, but she was in love with her fourth-cousin-once-removed Noah-the-Third, and she couldn't think about much else; for her father wouldn't let her get married. What would he do for a housekeeper if she did? Noah-the-Third didn't even live up at Partridgeville. His folks had moved away years before, down to the valley, where they all worked in the shops. Jerry's Zeb (he was Eliza's father) said that Eliza could get married any time that Noah-the-Third would find him a housekeeper. But there weren't any hired girls to be had in those days, and Jerry's Zeb hadn't any idea of paying decent wages, and anyhow nobody but a born Partridge was willing to live up there on the mountain, so far from everything. So poor Eliza spent a good deal of her time worrying about the girls in the valley who were, she was sure, trying to get her Noah away from her. Her little brother was sorry for her, and wished she *could* get married, because he liked her young man. And it would be fun to have somebody in the valley to go and visit.

That Saturday morning when he wanted his lunch

put up, he heard her crying in her room, and he'd rather have gone without any lunch at all than go in there. He did hate to see anybody crying.

["Yes, so do I!" said Jimmy heartily.]

But Jombatiste Laflamme, their French-Canadian hired man, was a good-hearted fellow, though they did think him a little foolish in the head sometimes, and he cut Young Josh a lot of slices of bacon off a piece that was hanging up in the smokehouse. The other boys didn't have any meat and they said they'd trade off some of their doughnuts and bread-and-butter for some of his bacon. And away they went.

Jombatiste asked them where they were going, and they said north, up to Tompkins' sugar-bush; and they did mean to, but they hadn't gone a mile before Little Noah said he'd heard the men talking about deer-tracks they'd seen up the mountain, near Cold Spring, so the boys decided to go there. They thought it would be fun to try to track the deer by their hoof-marks, like Indians.

They scrambled up the mountain along the stony trail that goes to Cold Spring, playing tag as they went. About halfway up there, they heard the greatest

yelping and yapping from Four-toed Noah's puppy (it was the first time they had taken him out in the woods with them). They went over to see what the matter was and there was poor Bowser getting ac-

quainted with his first porcupine. He had a dozen quills in his nose already, by the time the boys came up, and was yelling as if somebody was skinning him alive. Every puppy has to learn for himself, you know, what porcupines are. The boys had a hard time getting the quills out. It took all seven of them to hold Bowser quiet.

They kept those quills and picked up a lot of others

the porcupine had left before he ambled off. Somebody had given Jerry's Josh a napkin ring of birch-bark with a design stitched on it in colored porcupine quills, and the boys thought it would be fun to try to do something like that. They got some birch-bark as they went along, and began to talk about how they could color their quills. Noah-on-the-Hill said that the red in his necktie ran like everything when it was wet, and they dipped it in a brook to see. Sure enough, the color came off beautifully. Not on the porcupine quills because they were to shiny for it to stick; but on their faces and hands and arms it made the most splendid red smears you ever saw.

This made them think of playing Indians, and they began hunting for things to stick in their hair. They tore their birch-bark into strips, sort of fringed it out at the ends, and made red stripes on it with the wet necktie, and green stripes with some juicy leaves. The birch-bark curled up a little too, and looked like long curling feathers, red, green, and white. When they found a place where a fox and an owl had had a quarrel the night before, they smeared the loose feath-

ers with red and green, and stuck those in their hair, too. They began to look really fine and wild, but they wanted some yellow, too, and Little Noah said he knew where there was some yellow clay on the passage that led into Wilcox's cave.

They hadn't thought of going to the cave that day, but when Little Noah spoke of it, they all said it would be fun to make birch-bark torches and go in. They were quite a long way from the Raven Rocks (the cave was off to one side of the Rocks), but they knew their way about the woods all right, and they legged it over in that direction as fast as they could.

By the time they got there, they were very nearly starved. "Let's eat right now," said Little Noah. "I can't stand it another minute." It was only a little past eleven, but there weren't any grown-ups along to object, and so they could eat just whenever they felt like it.

["Didn't they have good times!" said Jimmy wistfully.]

Yes, I told you I never heard of boys who had better. They sat right down in front of the hole that was the

entrance to the cave, and pulled out of their pockets their different packages of lunch. Young Josh's was the bacon, of course, and that reminded them they'd have to cook it. As they ate the first pieces of bread-and-butter, they started the fire, but just when it was going nicely Zeb's Zeb caught sight of another porcupine moseying along in the woods.

"Oh, let's get some more quills!" they said, and ran off after it. All but Bowser, who wouldn't budge, and I don't blame him.

They held up punky sticks for the porcupine to lash at, and were just getting them nicely stuck up with quills, when Noah-on-the-Hill let out such a shriek that their hearts all but stopped beating. They thought he'd seen a bear. But it was worse than that! Their fire had caught on the dry leaves and was spreading in a big circle, beginning to roar like a furnace.

They were nearly scared to death when they saw it—not of the fire, but of what their fathers would do to them if they started a forest fire. Luckily everybody in those days understood what to do to put out a fire in the woods, and you should have seen those boys

go to it—stamping, beating at the flames with green pine-branches or their coats, tearing the leaves off the ground ahead of the fire, racing around to the places where it was spreading fastest. They worked till they were nearly ready to drop—actually drop, I mean—with their legs trembling under them, and their tongues hanging out just like a dog's, for it was fearfully hot and smoky so near the flames. But they finally smothered it out, every bit of it, and there was only a big blackened circle where it had been.

They stood around it, panting, and gasping, and wiping their eyes with their dirty hands, for of course they were all covered with smoke and charcoal.

"Suffering Moses!" said Little Josh.

"Gosh be dinged!" said Josh's Jerry.

"That was a close squeak," said Noah-on-the-Hill.

But all of a sudden Young Josh yelled out, "Where's my *bacon?*"

["Oh, *Mother!* That wasn't burned up, was it?" groaned Jimmy.]

No, sir, for a wonder it was not. Little Noah (he was the tallest) had remembered to put it up high in a bush to keep it out of the puppy's way, and there it was

safe and sound, a little warmish and soft, but perfectly good.

"Well, let's cook it now before something else happens," said Jerry's Josh.

"No more fires for me," said Josh's Jerry, who was the oldest.

"Let's go inside the cave and make a fire there," said Noah-on-the-Hill. "It'd be safe enough there."

So that is what they did. There was a very good place for a fire in the cave, after you had crawled through the yellow-clay passages and crossed the underground brook. You came out into a big dry room with sand on the floor and some sort of invisible air-hole high up, that carried off the smoke. Lots of people built fires there for picnics when it rained, or in winter.

But the boys didn't seem to have any sort of luck that day, for the smoke didn't go straight up as it always did. It kept drawing off to one side, so they all had to get on the other side of the fire to keep from being suffocated. Although, as they said, they'd swallowed so much smoke already, a little more or less didn't matter. They cooked the bacon, and ate the

They lay around it, pretending they were pirates.

rest of their lunch, and agreed that never, never in their lives had anything tasted so good.

They were pretty tired as well as hungry and when they got through nobody said anything about moving on. They put some more wood on the fire and lay around it pretending they were pirates or counterfeiters in their den. "Or runaway negroes hiding," said Noah-on-the-Hill. (This was before the Civil War, you know, when there were runaway negroes.)

"Negroes don't have red and green stripes on their faces," said Young Josh; for here and there the red blobs from the wet necktie showed through the soot and charcoal they were covered with.

Josh's Jerry said happily, "My! I bet I never was as dirty as this before!"

You see, having no grown-ups around, they could be as dirty as they liked.

["You needn't rub it in," said Jimmy.]

By and by Noah-on-the-Hill said: "Funny how the smoke goes today—off to one side like that. I wonder what makes it?"

They all rolled over to watch. The smoke went

off up a big slanting crack in the rock wall, just as if it went up a chimney.

"But that crack isn't open at the other end," said Josh's Jerry. "I've been up there lots of times. It ends in a sort of blind pocket."

They talked and argued about it for a while, and finally Young Josh said, "I'm going up to see."

He went up on his hands and knees, and they waited. In a minute his voice came back, all excited. "Hey there, boys! Come on up, quick!"

They scrambled up after him, and what do you suppose they found? The slanting passage led up to the face of the Raven Rocks, and during the summer sometime a big piece of the cliff must have dropped off, for they found themselves on a sort of open cave or ledge about thirty feet up from the bottom of the cliff. Some scrubby, branchy sumac bushes grew around the sides and almost hid the opening, but by sticking their heads through the leaves they could look away over the tops of the trees on the slope, across the valley and down to the river—and thirty feet of straight drop below them! Wasn't it almost too good to be true!

The first thing they did was to make everybody promise, lay-me-down-and-cut-me-in-two, not to tell anybody about it. They wanted to keep it for always just for their very own secret hiding-place. They could hardly believe it possible, and they scrambled up and down the passage about a million times to get acquainted with it. The fire was still smoldering and a little smoke was still drawing out, but not enough to bother them because it curled up along the roof of the passage and out through the tops of the bushes.

They were ever so much set up with all this, but they were really very tired with all their hiking and fire-fighting and rock-scrambling and before long they settled down again to talk it over and rest, and suck the pieces of hard maple-sugar they'd brought along for dessert.

This time they were sprawling around in the new place in the sun that came in warm and bright through the big hole that had been left by the landslide. They were too comfortable and happy for words, and as they got rested they began to fool around, joking and rough-housing and talking dog Latin. Zeb's Zeb was a great one for dog Latin. He'd invented lots of new

kinds that nobody could understand instead of that same old "Willery youery goery withery me-ery kind!"

["What kinds had he invented?" asked Jimmy.]

Well, one kind was to say your words backward like this: "Vig em a cip fo elpam ragus," instead of "Give me a piece of maple sugar." And another one was to add something to both ends of your words, instead of just afterward, like this for "Let me alone or I'll hit you a lick": "Velletbone velmebone velalonebone velorbone velhitbone——" Oh, gracious! I can't say it the way they did. They practiced it a lot, you see, and even at that, they never learned more than a few sentences they could rattle right off. That afternoon they were talking this at the tops of their voices when all of a sudden Noah-on-the-Hill said: "Shut up, boys! Seems as though I heard something!"

This scared them for fear somebody might come along and find out their hiding-place. They put their hands over their mouths hard, and then crept to the edge and very cautiously stuck their heads through the bushes to look down and see if anybody was going by. But there was nothing to be seen, except the same old woods and piles of rocks that had fallen off the cliffs.

So they gave a whoop and went to cutting up again.

They'd eaten their lunch so early that it wasn't long before they began to feel empty again. Somebody said how about going home and laying in some doughnuts. Noah-on-the-Hill said his mother was going to make doughnuts that afternoon and the day she made fresh, she always let the boys finish up the last week's ones. This sounded good, and it wasn't long before they had pulled the birch-bark and feathers out of their hair and were streaking it down the trail toward home.

On the way they went near the swimming-hole. This reminded them that they were very hot and sweaty so they pulled off their clothes and went in. They were really pretty dirty, too, but they didn't think of that.

"Now, Mother!" said Jimmy indignantly. "Not a grown-up with them, and nobody over twelve and they going in swimming by themselves. You never let *us* do that."

He had her for a minute. She couldn't think of a thing to say except that Little Noah was very big for his age, and that Josh's Jerry was a wonderful swimmer. But then she recovered herself and reminded the little boy that she wasn't to blame for what those wild little mountain boys did so long ago. He hadn't thought of that, and said no more.

The water was just right, the way it is at the end of summer, as warm as milk. They had the pool to themselves without any big cousins to make fun of them, and they practiced diving for ever so long, and were beginning really to get the hang of it, when they heard a lot of men's voices and saw their fathers and uncles and big brothers in a crowd come over the trail where it dips down through Old Zeb's pasture. The boys thought of course that a bear had been seen (they all had bear on the brain in those days) and fairly tore out of the water and into their clothes. You'd hardly have known them for the same crowd; their diving had washed their faces and arms and hands so clean it would almost scare you to look at them. And though

their hair wasn't combed, it was so wet it lay down flat and looked like Sunday morning.

When the men came up the boys found it was something much more exciting than bear. Jombatiste Laflamme had seen forty devils hanging in the air, ready to snatch his soul out of his body. Think of that!

"Black devils!" he told them, as they hurried along. "Red and black devils, wiz fire standing on zeir hades like ozzer pipple's hair, all flame-fire shoot up. And smoke, black smoke go up to ze sky from zem. An' zey talk devil-talk, loud, loud, an' I hear 'em say, 'Jombatiste he burn in fire when hees time come,' an' 'Jombatiste I steeck heem full of hot coals soon.' And zey hang in ze air like black crows and roll zeir eyes down at me, and speet fire at me, and . . ." He kept right on, till the little boys' hair fairly stood up, wet as it was.

"Don't you believe a word of it," said Jerry's Zeb. (He was young Josh's father, you remember.) "Jombatiste must have had a drop too many."

But they all knew that Jombatiste was a good steady boy.

The other men said, "All foolishness!" but the little

boys could see by the way they looked that they felt pretty queer about it. This was long ago, you remember. People in those days *said* they didn't believe in witches and devils any more, but they didn't like to go past the graveyard after midnight all the same.

The little boys were scared almost into fits to think that the very day they had been out, there had been devils around in the woods; and they got scareder as they saw that Jombatiste was leading them right close to where they had been.

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At this point Jimmy looked at his mother hard, and nodded his head. She saw that he understood, even before the whole crowd had brought up at the foot of the Raven Rocks and were staring up the straight sheer face of the cliffs to a bunch of scraggy-branched sumac bushes, thirty feet above their heads.

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"Zere zey were," said Jombatiste, and crossed himself. "Zere zey were, talking zeir devil-talk and

speetin' out smoke and rollin' zeir ugly white eyes at me—right zere in zose bushes."

Jimmy could not stand the suspense and now broke in, bouncing up and down on his chair with excitement. "Oh, I *hope* they didn't tell! It would have made Jombatiste look so foolish! They *did*n't tell, did they?"

No, of course they never said a word! After Jombatiste had given them the bacon they thought it would be mean to tell. They didn't even dare look at each other, for fear the men would suspect something. They just turned their clean, clean faces up with the others to stare at the sumac bushes, that looked as though, sure enough, they were hanging in the air. And they listened without saying a word as Jombatiste started in to tell it all over again. He hadn't got very far when one of the men jumped and turned rather white and said, "Hey, don't I see a little smoke right now?"

And there, sure enough, one little blue puff curled up out of the bushes and floated off into the air.

"I smell sulphur and brimstone!" said another, sniffing hard.

Old Zeb turned around and started down the trail. "I got to git back to my cows!" he called.

"Well, I just remember I left my bars open," said Young Zeb, starting after him.

It wasn't a minute before they had all crashed down the trail, as fast as they could clip it. The little boys went, too, each with his own folks now, of course. And this was how Young Josh found himself with Jombatiste and his father taking a short-cut.

Jombatiste was telling his father something and by and by his father got so interested he stopped short and sat down on a log to listen. Jombatiste was saying that he deserved to see devils because he had had a wicked thought in his heart as he was going along there that afternoon. He had been planning how he could steal some money from the house (Zeb had just sold his calves) and run away with it. And the devils knew that and had come up from hell to grab his soul.

Jerry's Zeb said, "But, Jombatiste, what ever made

you think of stealing money, such a good boy as you are?" And Jombatiste began to cry and said he wanted to pay for his mother to come down from way up in Canada somewhere, because the folks she was with were mean to her, and Jombatiste wanted to help her, and a whole lot more that Young Josh couldn't understand. But he got the idea all right when his father cut in, short and sharp, "Say, Jombatiste, *can your mother cook?*"

Jombatiste said she was the best cook in Canada, only she had one arm shriveled or something so she couldn't go fast, and couldn't hold a regular job; but that nobody could make johnnycake like hers, and that folks came for miles around to eat her succotash, and that when they had a church supper she was always the one to make the omelettes, and that her griddle-cakes . . .

Young Josh had just begun to feel that they hadn't had any doughnuts after all. It made him ache to hear all about those good things to eat. But he knew, he knew perfectly well *why* his father was asking so much about Jombatiste's mother's cooking. The reason why poured right into him and filled him full, so that in a

minute he even forgot about not having had the doughnuts.

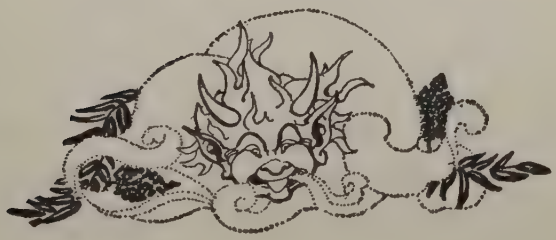
"Say, Father, can I go down in the valley to stay overnight with Aunt Lu?" he asked.

And when his father, without paying much attention, said yes he could if he wanted to, he fairly flew down the road to the valley. But it wasn't Aunt Lu he wanted to see. It was Noah-the-Third. He found him with the men from the shops, just coming out after his day's work, and hurried him off to one side, into a corner of the barn, on the hay. There he began at the beginning and told the whole story. You should have seen how Noah-the-Third listened, with his mouth open. And when Young Josh finished up with his father's inquiring all about Jombatiste's mother's cooking, the young man reached down into his pocket and took out his best pocket-knife. He laid this on the little boy's knee and said, "You can have that for keeps. And I'll give you my hunting-knife too. And as soon as your father will let you go hunting, I'll buy you a shotgun. And you can wear my coonskin cap. And I'll make you a canoe for next summer. And you can have my snowshoes when you grow up to them. And

when Eliza and I are married, we'll always take you to the Fair every year."

Jimmy had been looking puzzled by the ending, but the mention of Eliza made it all clear. "Oh, *yes,* sure! Of *course! That* was why the cooking was so—why, I had forgotten all about Eliza!"

"Well, Noah-the-Third hadn't!" said his mother.



Clover's Story

One day when Clover was visiting them, the children were talking about the Made-to-Order Stories, and she said she'd like to have one made for her.

"But how would a girl know what to have in it?" asked Jimmy.

"Why couldn't I know as well as you?" answered Clover.

"Let's hear you then," said Jimmy.

"I want it about a pair of tongs, and a set of false teeth . . ."

Even Jimmy had to admit that these were all right. In fact his eye lighted up at the false teeth. You could see he wished he'd thought of them.

But Clover went on, glancing dreamily out of the window into the blue twilight where the brook was

singing and the crickets chirping. "And I want . . . a cricket . . . and a star."

"Now *there!*" cried Jimmy, looking indignantly at his mother. "A star!"

"Haven't you any confidence in your mother, yet?" she said. "You leave that star alone."

"I never touched it," said Jimmy, but he looked more hopeful and sat down cross-legged to listen.

"Perhaps I oughtn't to tell you this story," she said; "for Aunt Paulina was always rather sensitive about it, and didn't really like to have it mentioned. She was a very ladylike person, the way people used to be when there were still things they didn't mention. But she never said *not* to tell it, and anyhow Great-Uncle Nathaniel was my relative as well as hers, and so his teeth were family property in a manner of speaking. If they'd been Aunt Paulina's now, I might feel different. But she always wore her own even after she was quite old, and only had three left. She said she never could abide the thought of false ones after what she went through with Great-Uncle Nathaniel's. And yet see how well it turned out for her in the end."

"But for goodness gracious sake!" cried Clover, looking bewildered.

"Never mind its being all mixed up to begin with," Jimmy reassured her. "You have to get the hang of the Made-to-Order Stories. This is only the beginning."

"But I haven't heard any beginning yet!" cried Clover.

"No," said his mother, "I haven't come to that yet." Clover did not look as though this made her understand very much better, but she said no more, and the story went on.

As a matter of fact, it began the morning after Great-Uncle Nathaniel's funeral when Aunt Paulina went over to Thompkinsville to clear out his bureau drawers and closets. She was the one in our family who always did that when the old people died. Although he had been so awfully old, ninety-four, he had had lots of clothes, especially lots of shirts, and it took her quite a time to sort them over. She had thought

they'd better go to the Waterbury cousins, but, finding them pretty well worn, she decided that Cousin Elliott would better take them. She had finished looking them over, had decided to give his gold cuff-links to Uncle Marshall's son, and had just taken up a little wooden box to see what was in it, when they called to her from downstairs that the man from the garage was there in the car to take her to the station. So she put the little box in her bag, and hurried off, intending to come back and finish the closets the next day.

At the station she only just had time to buy her ticket and get on the train and as she did, Mrs. Hinckley, the wife of the president of our bank, beckoned to her to come and take the seat beside her. They got to talking, both being interested in foreign missions and Aunt Paulina was very much pleased to be sitting there so easy and familiar, talking with the bank president's wife about Shanghai and Ming-Gaing-Seng when she thought she was going to sneeze. She opened her bag in rather a hurry and snatched out her handkerchief. The little wooden box came out with it, rolled over on Mrs. Hinckley's lap, hit against her umbrella handle, and the lid opened. And there on Mrs. Hinckley's

black-silk lap lay Great-Uncle Nathaniel's false teeth, uppers and lowers, smiling at her.

She turned as white as a sheet, gave a great start, and said in a loud angry voice, "Scat! Scat! Get away! Get off!" and knocked them off her lap so hard they went flying into the aisle of the car. Of course everybody jumped and looked around, and, seeing Mrs. Hinckley so excited, they thought naturally that the teeth were hers, and she'd lost them out. A young man in the seat ahead of her sprang up politely, trying not to laugh, picked them up and handed them back to her with a bow. She was as red as a beet by this time and fairly took his head off. "They're not mine! What makes you think they're mine! The *idea!*" She looked at poor Aunt Paulina as if she could kill her.

"Oh they're *yours,* madam," said the polite young man, turning to Aunt Paulina. By that time everybody was laughing in spite of trying not to. All but Aunt Paulina. She was almost crying.

"Well, no, they're not *mine* exactly." She began to explain, because she didn't like, any more than Mrs. Hinckley, to have people think she'd lose her teeth right

out in a train. Especially as she still had all her own, with only one grinder gone.

"Yes, they are, too!" cried Mrs. Hinckley, madder and madder. "You needn't try to pass them off as anything else. Why don't you wear them like a Christian instead of carrying them around in your bag to——" She got up to her feet now. "I am going to another seat, I feel a draught here," she said, crowding past Aunt Paulina, and tramping hard down the aisle.

Aunt Paulina started to explain again to the young man how it happened she had them in her bag, but it sounded so flat and improbable even to her, that she stopped and let him drop them back in her bag, shutting her mouth and the bag at the same time.

After a while, when she thought nobody was looking, she tried to open the window and throw them out, but you know how nobody can ever open the window in a day-coach; anyhow, just then the brakeman called her station and she had to get off. She had thought of leaving them behind her under the seat, but it seemed to her that everybody was looking at her as she stood up, and she imagined they were all trying to see whether she had got her teeth back in her mouth. So

she didn't dare drop them. But in the station she went straight into the ladies' toilet room, pretended to wash her hands, and when nobody was in the room put the teeth in among the crumpled paper towels in the waste-paper basket. It made her sick to think of touching them, they had such a ghastly look, so she only opened her bag and let them fall out of themselves.

What had happened in the train seemed perfectly dreadful to her, ladylike and retiring as she was, and she was so relieved to have the dreadful things off her mind that, although she must have been forty years old by that time, she felt like jumping up and down for joy as she hurried across the waiting-room to the street. Halfway home, she stopped at the butcher's to get some meat for her cat, and when she opened her hand-bag to pay for it she found to her horror that the little beaded bag she kept her money in was gone, *with more than fifteen dollars in it!*

She knew in a minute what had happened and tore back to the station her heart all in a flutter. There were several ladies there, putting on powder, and washing their hands, and they were all as sympathetic as could be, when she rushed in and said what she was

looking for. In a minute they'd emptied the basket out on the floor, and were pawing around in the crumpled towels; and in a minute more one of them was holding out her money-purse to her, and another one Great-Uncle Nathaniel's teeth. "Why, you must have lost them *again,*" she said gently, "I was sitting right behind you in the train when they fell out the first time."

Aunt Paulina didn't like a bit the way she said "fell out the first time!" but of course she couldn't refuse to take them. She blushed and looked so queer as she held open her bag for the lady to drop them in that they all stared, and she knew they thought there must be something suspicious about her.

She had to go through the motions of thanking them, helped them get the dirty towels back in the basket and went away, as nervous as a cat, those teeth weighing her down like a load of brick. By that time she was so worked up about them that she imagined that everybody was looking oddly at her, and she was very thankful that twilight was coming on as she turned up her own street.

At that time she lived with a big Angora cat in a

little house with a front and back yard. She was all by herself except Aunt Isbey, a fat old colored woman who came in Mondays to wash and Saturdays to clean. By this time she realized that, having the house all to herself, she had been foolish to try to get rid of those things in public, so to speak, when if she only waited till she was inside her own doors, she could do as she pleased without a soul to see her.

Mr. and Mrs. Trippe, her next-door neighbors, were on their porch when she turned up her path, and Mrs. Trippe called out, "Well, did you have a nice outing?" She knew they wanted her to step over and tell them where she'd been and what for, because they were very nosey, curious people, who always wanted to know all about other folks' business. But she didn't want to see *any*body till she got those teeth off her mind, so she just murmured something and went in quick to her own house and shut the door behind her, rather hard. Then she drew down the shades, and turned the key in the door and drew a long breath of relief.

And yet, after she'd eaten her supper and given the cat his, and settled herself in her big chair with her

feet on the cricket to think, she realized that she wasn't really any further along. How could she dispose of those teeth, after all? It was midsummer and she hadn't any fire in her cookstove, and anyhow they were set in metal and wouldn't burn. If she put them in the garbage pail she knew in her bones that the garbage man would see them and bring them back to her, as like as not when the Trippes were out in their yard to see. There they lay, on her work table, where she'd emptied out her bag, and grinned at her, without saying a word, till she felt a cold chill up her back, they looked so like a part of an unburied dead body.

There! That gave her the idea she'd wanted. She'd bury them the way you do any other dead thing. She jumped up, relieved, put on her shawl and went to the woodshed to get the fire shovel, for Aunt Isbey, her colored cleaning woman, kept the fire-things out there in warm weather. Then she went over to the table. But she'd worked herself up so about the teeth that she couldn't bear the idea of touching them. So she went back to the woodshed again, got the tongs and picked the teeth up with them. Holding the tongs clamped tightly together, she went out of the kitchen

door into her back-yard garden, down to the bean-patch. There she started to dig a hole with the fire shovel. But after two or three shovelfuls she stopped short. Her back-yard garden was plowed up every spring, and Jed Parmelee did the plowing. Those teeth would be just as good after a winter's stay in the ground as they were this minute, she knew. And standing there in the dark, by herself, she could fairly hear Jed's great coarse, "Haw! haw! haw!" as he'd bring them up to her in the house. She knew he would never let her hear the last of it. Old-maidish and precise as she was, it made her shudder to think of having those wretched teeth flung up at her *again*.

No, the front yard would be best. Once under the sod of the lawn, they'd be safe. She stooped down to find the tongs, and got hold of them all right, but naturally the teeth had dropped out. She fumbled around with the tongs in the dark, but although she could hear them click against the teeth she couldn't get them clamped together on the teeth. She tried to be brave and feel around with her hands, but the very idea of touching those cold dead things in the *dark* made her flesh creep. She felt by this time that they would bite her. No, she'd have to go back into the house and get a match.

When she had done that and was out in the garden once more, she scratched the match as well as she could (her fingers were pretty shaky and her nerves all on edge), and as the little flame burned up she stooped over quick with the tongs, for she saw the teeth shining white by the edge of the hole she'd started to dig.

But just as she stooped she heard a voice say right in her ear:

"Why, it's *you!*"

She gave such a great start that the match dropped down and went out. In the darkness she heard her

teeth chattering—at least she hoped it was her own that were chattering, although she wouldn't have put it past the dead ones to do so.

Of course in an instant she recognized the voice, and knew it was her neighbor, Mr. Trippe; and as she caught her breath she said: "Yes, yes, yes, of course it's me. Wh-wh-wh-wh-who did you think it was?"

"Well, we couldn't *imagine,*" said Mr. Trippe through the darkness. "Mrs. Trippe had stepped out on the back porch to hang up the dish-towels and thought she heard somebody moving around stealthily in your woodshed. We always feel, you know, that we ought to look out for you, living all alone as you do . . ."

Aunt Paulina tossed her head, although it couldn't be seen. She did use to get so tired of having the Trippes throw it up to her that she was an old maid.

"So Mrs. Trippe came right in and told me, and when I went to listen I heard somebody out here in the garden fumbling around. I thought to myself that anybody who had come for any good purpose would have a light, and probably it was chicken-thieves. So I got my revolver——"

"Your revolver!" screamed Aunt Paulina, backing off in a hurry. She was terribly afraid of firearms.

But she brought up with a start. She'd no idea which way those teeth were. Suppose she should step on them! She felt she'd rather step on a snake. Oh, how could she make Mr. Trippe go away? She clasped her hands together hard. What could she say? She couldn't think of any reason for being out in her back garden at night with a fire shovel and the tongs, not to mention an upper and lower set of teeth.

"Did you lose something out here?" suggested Mr. Trippe, easy and natural, and Aunt Paulina gasped with relief, "Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes," she said, stammering and trying to think, "I was—I was sewing out here yesterday morning and I lost my thimble."

She'd never told a lie before in her life, but she didn't care. She'd have told a hundred if she could have thought of them.

"Oh, too bad!" said Mr. Trippe sympathetically. "I'll strike a match and help you look."

Then Aunt Paulina knew why it was wicked to tell lies. "Oh, no, no, no!" she said, stammering more than ever. "No, I don't *want* it now. I don't *want* it!"

"Oh, it's no trouble at all," said Mr. Trippe obligingly. "I'm sure I have some matches in my pocket. I always carry them."

Aunt Paulina could hear him slapping himself and feeling around, and could feel herself begin to sink through the ground. But he finally said, "No, I must have left the box in my other coat."

"Oh, *leave* it till tomorrow!" begged Aunt Paulina. "I'd rather! I'd rather! Oh, why don't you go back into your own house!"

Mr. Trippe heard how queer her voice sounded, as if she were half strangled, and stood still for a minute. He said to himself that there was more in this than met the eye. Why should she get so worked up about a thimble? And anyhow, why should she have gone to sew out in the middle of her bean-patch? He said stiffly, "Oh, just as you like, I'm sure," and went off.

Aunt Paulina didn't dare stay there after him, and go on looking for the teeth. So she went back into her house and shut the door.

But she didn't go to bed. She sat up in a chair by the kitchen window waiting till the Trippes' house was dark and they were asleep. She was about worn out

by this time, poor Aunt Paulina, and the first thing she knew she dozed off in the chair, and only woke up when a bright light shone in her eyes. The moon had risen and was pouring down on the house and garden as clear as day.

Aunt Paulina jumped up, ran out quickly to the bean-patch, and there lay the tongs, criss-cross over those teeth, gnashing themselves at her in the moonlight. She was too tired to care *what* they did, grabbed them up with the tongs and scurried back into the house. There she lifted a stove-lid and dropped them temporarily into the cold cook-stove. She said to herself that they could stay there till morning anyhow, till she could get some rest from them.

She was a long time dropping off to sleep, and when she did, she dreamed all night that she'd murdered somebody and was trying to dispose of the corpse.

But you know how much better you are in the morning, after a good night's sleep, and how foolish you feel about what scared you in the dark. Aunt Paulina opened her eyes to the quiet sun shining through the white dimity curtains in her own bedroom and thought

to herself: "Mercy sakes! What was the matter with me last night! How like a born fool I did act!"

She dressed herself cheerfully. She went down boldly to the kitchen as cool as a cucumber. She lifted the stove-lid. And the teeth were gone.

She gave a gasp and stared. Then she thought, "Oh, I must have dropped them in through another lid."

She lifted all the lids, one after another, slam! bang! slam! bang! But there weren't any teeth there. Nothing but the ashes which Aunt Isbey, the colored woman, always forgot to clean out.

Well, when you could persuade Aunt Paulina to tell you the story, she always said that, as she stood there in her own quiet kitchen, with the outside door and all the windows locked tight, and the cat asleep on the cricket, that right then and there, she was the most scared of any time in her life. She was too scared to move or turn her head, even if (as she half expected) she'd heard those teeth come clicking down the stairs and into the room behind her. Had they crept upstairs in the night and *crawled under her bed!* She'd always been frightfully afraid of something

getting under her bed, and this was lots worse than burglars.

Some board or other snapped in the pantry as she stood there, and the cold sweat came out over her in big drops. Her knees and elbows went to water, and she sat down all in a heap on the nearest thing, which happened to be the cricket with the cat on it.

The cat squalled and wriggled, and Aunt Paulina bounded up again like a Jack-in-the-box. And this did her good, for she got mad, ladylike as she was, and kicked the cat. She used to say that she was so beside herself she'd have sworn at the cat if she'd known how. But the only swear-word she knew was "Darn it all" and there was nothing about a cat in that. Nor about teeth, either.

Well, sir, just as she was kicking the cat, and the cat was squalling, somebody knocked at her door. She went over to open it, very much flustered, of course; and there stood a strange man, very nicely dressed, with a derby hat on, and a broad pleasant face.

"Is this Miss Paulina Hawley?" he asked politely, taking off his hat.

The cat squalled and wriggled, and Aunt Paulina bounded up again.

Aunt Paulina nodded. She was thinking it was early in the morning for book-agents.

He said, "I am Mr. Adoniram Marsh, from Police Headquarters." And he threw back his coat lapel to show a nickel-plated detective's star.

[*"Aha!"* shouted Jimmy.]

"And I have been requested to inform myself in the matter of certain inexplicable and unaccountable actions of yours."

Aunt Paulina thought that he really must have been a book-agent sometime in his life if not now, because he talked so like one.

"What about my actions?" she said, still mad at the cat, so that she spoke rather sharply.

"One of your neighbors, who wishes to remain anonymous, informs me," said Mr. Marsh, "that you absented yourself from the locality yesterday, that your manner and appearance at the railway station on your return were extremely equivocal, that, arrived at your own residence, you replied suspiciously to friendly greetings, that you shut yourself up at once, locking doors, although it was then only twenty-seven minutes past six, and pulled down all the window-

shades, although it is your custom to leave those in the pantry up." He drew a long breath, pulled down his vest, and went on, "Furthermore, deponent saith—I mean to say that at ten o'clock you went out into your garden and began to dig a hole. When interrupted in this operation, you became terrified, prevaricated as to your intentions, and went hastily back into your house again. A watch being kept upon you, you were seen to leave the house at two o'clock in the morning——"

"Well, of all the low-down——" cried Aunt Paulina.

"You went again into the garden, furtively seized objects which looked to the watchers like parts of a human skull, together with a formidable iron weapon like a bludgeon and——"

Now Aunt Paulina was a ladylike old maid, right enough, but she was a Hawley, and the Hawleys always have good ordinary sense, for all their genteel notions, and she had some, right there. Anyhow she liked the looks of Mr. Marsh, into the bargain. She said:

"Well, Mr. Marsh, I'm really glad to see you here. If anybody ever needed the advice of a detective, I

do this very minute. Won't you sit down there, in that chair? Just brush the cat out on the floor. And have you had your breakfast yet? Because I haven't had mine and I'll get the coffee started while we talk."

He said he hadn't, took off his hat, sat down, and pulled the cat up on his knees to stroke her. Aunt Paulina noticed this. She always liked people who were good to animals. She hustled around and got the bacon and coffee cooking while she told him the whole story of those teeth right from the beginning. By the time she came to the part where she had dropped them into the stove, the coffee and toast were done, and they sat down together as cozy as could be.

"But that's nothing, compared to what's happened now," she said, passing him the bacon, "for this morning, when I came down, they were gone."

"Gone!" said the detective. "How could they be gone?"

"That's what I want to know," she said. "I'm no detective, and I can't imagine. Every door has been locked, and every window; and all night long, too. Nobody could have entered." Now that she had a man

in the house she wasn't a bit afraid any more, and was enjoying her breakfast and her talk with him.

"I'll take measurements and look for finger-prints, as soon as I've finished my breakfast," he said; "and allow me, madam, to remark that not since my boyhood have I tasted coffee such as this. If you could but conceive the execrable concoctions which we are forced to endure, in the boarding-houses which are our sad fate . . ."

Aunt Paulina admired his language very much, and sympathized with him about the coffee. She liked good coffee, too.

"There would be no possibility, madam," he inquired, as he buttered his third slice of toast, "of offering you inducements tending to permit me to make arrangements to take my meals with you?"

"Well, I don't know," said Aunt Paulina. "I never thought of taking a boarder, but perhaps——"

It seemed rather pleasant to her to think of somebody coming in every day with all the news, and especially a detective who would always have such lots of news. Mr. Marsh was a nice-looking man, too, and she thought he would be easy to get along with. So

they settled it that way before they got up from the table.

Then Mr. Marsh took measurements, analyzed the ashes in the stove, looked through a magnifying glass at the finger-marks on the stove-lid lifter, and took a wax impression of the lock of the kitchen door. When he finished, and had made notes on all these things, he said that in his opinion the teeth had been taken by somebody who had come up through the cellar door, who was a tall, red-haired, left-handed man of middle age, and who——

"Why, that's Mr. Trippe!" cried Aunt Paulina.

"Your opinion coincides with mine, madam," said Mr. Marsh, buttoning up his coat and looking firm.

Aunt Paulina put out her hand. "Leave him alone," she said. "I hated those teeth from the minute I saw them. *Let* him keep them! Much good may they do him!"

"Your magnanimity, madam, is on a par with your culinary abilities," said Mr. Marsh. "There isn't, I suppose, a drop more left in the coffee-pot?"

"I'll make some more," said Aunt Paulina, and she did. . . .

So that was the way it turned out. Mr. Marsh boarded there for a year and then he married Aunt Paulina. Everybody was so surprised to have her marry, at her age. And quite a nice man too. For he soon stopped being a detective and taught English Literature in the fashionablest private school in town.

"Is that the *end?*" asked Clover.

"Well, they were married and lived happy ever afterward. What more can you have as an end!"

"I think that's the meanest trick—the way you used my star and cricket!" she cried indignantly.

Jimmy brushed her objection to one side, hastily. "Oh, that was all right. I liked that. But I don't take any stock in the idea that it was Mr. Trippe who stole those teeth. What under the sun would he want them for? I believe Aunt Paulina forgot where she put them and——"

"No, of course Mr. Trippe never took them," said his mother. "And neither Aunt Paulina nor Mr. Marsh thought he did, either. By that time they were a great deal more interested in each other than in those

teeth. All Aunt Paulina wanted, anyhow, was to get rid of them. They just said anything to stop bothering about them."

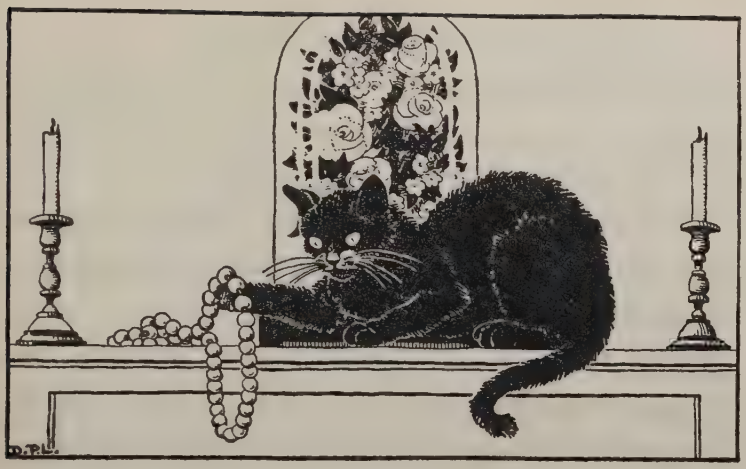
"But who *did?* How——" began Jimmy.

"About five years after that," said his mother, "Aunt Paulina (Mrs. Marsh, she was then) was called up in the middle of the night by a little colored girl who said Aunt Isbey thought she was dying and wanted to see Miss P'liny. Aunt Paulina and her husband went right off and found old Aunt Isbey all doubled up with cramps and groaning her head off. She said she wanted to confess. *She'd* taken those teeth. It seems she'd always wanted some nice shiny teeth to dress up with, but never could get enough money laid by to buy them. That morning (it had been a Friday) she'd gone over to Aunt Paulina's house to say that she couldn't go the next day to clean, as she usually did, and to ask if she couldn't clean that day, instead. Aunt Paulina was so tired she had overslept, and she wasn't up when Aunt Isbey got there. But of course Aunt Isbey had a key to the kitchen door, and she stepped in, meaning to start the fire and get breakfast ready. And when she lifted

the stove-lid—well, you can imagine! She just couldn't resist!

" 'But mercy me! They can't have *fitted* you!' said Aunt Paulina.

" 'Oh, Lawsy me! Miss P'liny, I ain't nevah done try to *eat* wid 'em. I des held 'em in ma mouf, and sort o' sucked up ma breaf and poked 'em up wid ma tongue, when I went to chu'ch,' said Aunt Isbey, 'or to a fun'ral! Dey been a blessing from de Lawd, fo' fun'rals!' "



The Very Last Story of All

There had been a misunderstanding over the telephone about Jimmy's appointment with the dentist, and when they arrived, they found that he would have an hour to wait his turn. All by himself, too, because his mother had errands to do.

"Oh, I'll be all right!" said Jimmy, leaning back in a big chair. "I've got something I want to think about."

When his mother went back, two hours later, to get him, he looked very cheerful for anybody who has been with the dentist, and when they climbed into the

Ford he said, at once, "Mother, do you remember the Chinaman, and the little-boy-and-his-mother that you didn't know how he got into the cellar of?"

"Yes, indeed, I remember him. I've worried so much about them all. And I've wondered and *wondered* how he ever got there."

"Well, I know," said Jimmy, "and I'll tell you. The Chinaman's family (his name was Lu Ching), you remember how he said his family had written him something. This is what it was. They had always had a sort of holy bowl of copper that all their folks had had for thousands of years, and when anybody in the family died, they thought the funeral was no good unless the grave was sprinkled with cold tea from out this special bowl."

"Cold *tea,* Jimmy!" exclaimed his mother.

"Yes, you know the Chinese are great for tea."

If Jimmy wasn't telling a Made-to-Order Story himself!

Well, it was a very old bowl—an antique, you know, like what people keep in antique shops and sell—and first thing the family knew, somebody had come along

and stolen it on them. They were *wild,* because how could any of them dare die without that bowl to make the funeral right? They thought, you see, that if their grave wasn't properly sprinkled, the dead person would turn into an angleworm, and of course that's not a very nice idea. So one of Lu Ching's brothers started right out to get the bowl back in a hurry because one of their old aunts was sick and might die any minute. He went around to all the antique shops in their town, till he found one man who said: "Yes, somebody brought in that bowl a day or so ago. But I've already sold it off to an antique dealer in Shanghai."

Well, so the brother had to go to Shanghai. He didn't have much money, and had to work his way down the river (I think Shanghai is on a river, but I'll look it up when I can get hold of my geography book) and that took him quite a while, and when he got there, he found that the antique-man in Shanghai had sent it off by mail to an antique-man in the very town in the United States where the little boy and his mother lived.

Of course the brother thought of Lu Ching, and

wrote him about it, and how scared the old aunt was for fear she would die before they could get it back. He didn't know very much about where places are in America, because they don't study such a lot, I don't suppose, about United States geography in the Chinese schools. So he didn't know about Cincinnati being so far away, or anything.

When Lu Ching got the letter, he was flabbergasted. First off, he knew better than to take any stock in that grave-sprinkling idea. And then he didn't see however in the world he was ever going to get himself from Cincinnati clear off to that town and back again. Right in examination time, too. But his home folks had always been so good to him, and he knew they believed every word about that angleworm performance, so he thought he'd have to try to do his best.

Well, he sold all his clothes just but one suit (you remember he said he hadn't only but that coat he had on) and got out all the little money he had in the savings bank. That made him just enough to pay for his round-trip ticket, but nothing over to buy the bowl. On the train he thought and he thought about how he was ever going to get it, and he finally decided that it

wouldn't be really stealing to take back what somebody had stolen from them to begin with.

And besides, how *else* could he get it!

So when night came, he went around to the address his brother had given him—122 East Bridge Street—and looked the house over. He saw the boarded-up window in the cellar, and got the boards pried off by using a shovel somebody had left out in the yard. He thought if he could get into the cellar and hide till everybody was asleep he could sneak up the cellar stairs, and get his bowl.

[Jimmy had hardly drawn breath till now, when he stopped, pulled his cap farther forward over his eyes, and went on.]

Well, he had got as far as this, in what he was telling the mother, when she said: "Oh, but Mr. Ching, this is 122 *West* Bridge Street! And we haven't an antique in the house. Nothing but inventions."

When he heard that, Lu Ching was just ready to give up and pass away, he was so discouraged. The little boy's mother said she knew how he felt, and that she would help him out. So she and the little boy

brought the stepladder downstairs and he climbed out on that.

"Let's see your coat," said the mother. And as soon as she looked at it she said she'd mended lots worse tears than that. She said the things her little boy did to his clothes most every day, were worse than that, she told him.

Then she took him up to the kitchen and she cooked him a regular meal: sausage, and fried eggs, and biscuit, and lots and lots of sausage gravy, and johnny-cake, and baked sweet potatoes, and apple jelly, and mince pie and doughnuts and cake and cheese and buckwheat cakes and syrup. It was so late by that time, she and the little boy were hungry, too, and they sat down and ate. They had ever such a good time, visiting with Lu Ching, and hearing about China. The little boy had always wondered, fristance, how ever they could manage to eat green peas with chopsticks, and now he could ask.

"Oh, Jimmy, how interesting!" cried his mother. "Tell me how they do."

"I'm afraid I wouldn't have time just now," he said, "because there's such lots more about how they got the bowl back. I guess you sort of forgot about the bowl, didn't you, Mother?"

She admitted that it had slipped her mind for an instant.

Well it was what everything was about [Jimmy reminded her], and of course it was what they were talking about mostly. How they could get it from the antique-man. For they knew that if he suspected they wanted it specially, he'd put the price up, fierce. They couldn't seem to think up any plan, and said they'd have to go to bed, and maybe in the morning, they'd have thought of something.

But the little boy thought of something that night, just before he went to sleep. And in the morning he streaked it right across town to the antique-shop. It stood under a big elm tree, and that year the elm-tree worms were awful. They were all over the tree, and they dropped down and *dropped* down on the sidewalk in front of the shop. Anybody that wanted to go in had to walk on them. And you know how ladies

hate to feel worms squashing under their feet. The antique man swept his walks and swept them off, but the worms were too many for him. Everybody in town had heard him say that that tree would be the death of him, yet. The little boy had watched his father invent so much that he'd got the habit, too, and this is what he said to the antique-man:

"If you'll pay me, I'll climb up in that tree with a spray-pump full of poison spray and in half a day I'll kill all the worms on it, and you can sweep them up and be done with it."

The antique-man was sort of surprised at first, and the little boy had to talk to him quite a lot. He told him:

"I'm so light, you see, and I've practiced climbing trees such a lot, I can get out on every single branch where a man wouldn't dare go for fear it would break under him. I only weigh seventy-six pounds and a half, you see."

All right, the antique-man said, he'd agree to that, only he couldn't pay very much, because business was poor that season.

The little boy said he didn't care so much about the

money anyway. He thought it would be fun to do it. He always liked climbing around in trees. If the antique-man would give him some little do-dad out of his shop, they could call it square.

The antique-man said sure he would, but they'd better decide on it now, so's to save quarreling about it afterward. And the little boy said he'd just as soon pick it out now as any time.

So he walked around the shop awhile, as if he didn't know what to choose. And first he picked out a pair of andirons, and then he asked how about an old lantern, and after a while he sort of yawned and said: "How about this battered old copper bowl? My mother might like to take that to keep her tacks in, when she's tacking down the stair-carpet."

The antique-man said sure he didn't care anything about that old thingamajig. It wasn't what he'd ordered, anyhow.

And with that the little boy beat it home to get his spray-pump. Lu Ching hadn't started out yet because his coat was being mended. He was still at the table, eating a fried egg with his chopsticks, when the little boy ran in and told them all about it.

Well, that's all. The little boy did spray the tree; and the worms did drop off and die; and the antique-man did give him the bowl, and he did give it to Lu Ching; and Lu Ching did send it to China; and the old aunt didn't die before it got there. I don't think she's dead yet, come to think of it.

Before he went back to Cincinnati, Lu Ching wanted to know what he could do to make it up to the little boy and his mother. The little boy said he didn't want any pay. He always did hate a worm, he said, and he had been glad to see them drop off and get swept up. The mother knew Lu Ching was poor and didn't want to ask for anything that would cost much, so she said, if they had pretty beads in China, maybe he could send a string back, when he went home.

Well, he wrote them lots of nice letters from Cincinnati while he went on learning to be a doctor; and he wrote them lots of nice letters from China, too, and the little boy used to have the most splendiferous stamps to trade off to the other kids. But he never said anything about any beads. They used to say they guessed he had forgotten all about them, and no wonder.

The little boy did spray the tree; and the worms did drop off and die.

But one day a Packard car drove up and out got another Chinaman to see them. He said he was a friend of Lu Ching's; and he gave them all the news, how Lu Ching was head doctor in the hospital in their town, and how he was married and had lots of babies, and one of them was named after the little American boy, and how often he told his children the story about the time he fell into the hole in the cellar.

They wanted to be nice to him, and so after a few minutes they said wouldn't he wait a minute or two while they went into the kitchen to make some lemonade and to get out the cookies. He said, of course he'd wait, and the last they saw of him, he was leaning back in a chair on the porch, his legs crossed, as if he was going to stay there all summer.

But when they went back with the lemonade and cookies, he was gone. And the car was gone. Like that. Not hide nor hair to be seen of them. But on the table, on the porch, was a great long string of *wonderful* beads, blue ones, strung on a silver wire.

Of course they understood, and laughed and said what a nice funny way Lu Ching had taken to send the beads after all. The mother put them on over her

head. She had on a white dress that day, and they looked just great!

Just then they heard the cat knocking something around in the living-room, and went in there. She was up on the mantel-piece playing with a string of *won*derful beads, yellow ones, strung on a gold wire.

"Why," said the little boy's mother, "he left *two!* These will be for best, to wear with my cream-colored silk dress."

"He left more than two!" said the little boy, for he'd just found another string on the piano, white ones, all carved, like white roses.

"Oh, Jimmy! How perfectly lovely!" cried his mother.

It wasn't so bad. Well, sir, they kept finding beads, for days and *days*. In the buffet-drawer when they went to set the table; in the bottom of the clock when they wound it up; hanging on the hook where the little boy kept his raincoat; on the piano keys when they lifted the lid—everywhere! They found so many they

had to sell a lot, and they made so much money they went downtown to the refrigerator shop and bought the most expensive refrigerator in town. And that's the end.

Jimmy drew a long breath, and so did his mother.

"Well, Jimmy!" she said. "It's almost too good to be true, to have it turn out so well, after all our worrying about it."

"Yes, I was glad, too," said Jimmy.

They were almost home by this time, and as they ground up the hill in low speed, a new idea struck his mother.

"Look here, Jimmy," she said. "If you can do Made-to-Order Stories like that, you won't need me any more. You can tell them for yourself now."

For an instant Jimmy looked surprised. Then: "Why, that's so!" he said. "I suppose I can."

THE END

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